DragonLance®

Lost Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home

Edited by

Margaret Weis

Lost Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home

Edited by

Margaret Weis

Lost Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home

This d20 System® game accessory utilizes mechanics developed for the new Dungeons & Dragons® game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

This Wizards of the Coast® Official Licensed Product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit www.wizards.com/d20.

Dungeons & Dragons, D&D, Dungeon Master, Dragonlance, the Dragonlance Logo, d20, the d20 System Logo, Wizards of the Coast, and the Wizards of the Coast Logo are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. © 2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

First Printing—2007. Printed in the USA. © 2007 Margaret Weis Productions Ltd. Margaret Weis Productions and the Margaret Weis Productions Logo are trademarks owned by Margaret Weis Productions, Ltd. All rights reserved.

Additional information and content available at
www.dragonlance.com.

Written & Published by

Margaret Weis Productions Ltd.
253 Center Street #126
Lake Geneva, WI 53147-1982
United States
www.margaretweis.com

Contents

Lost Bios

Adrian Du Chagne: Palantha's Lord of Lies
6

Nagash, Lightning Draconian
8

Crucible in the War of the Lance
11

Crimson Skies
15

Lost Relics

Amulet of the Soul's Fire
19

The Beastheart
20

Bloodthorn
21

Bronze Stylus of Eons
22

Eye Of The Storm
23

The Gnomish Wrench of Reorx
24

Habbakuk's Av
25

Hiddukel's Dice
26

Shinare's Scales
27

The Last Altar
28

Majere's Everlasting Rose
29

Mishakal's Grace
30

Obsidian Orb of Infinity
31

Pathfinder
32

Ring of Laughter
33

The Staff of Argon
34

Taivul (Kiri-Jolith)
35

Lost Magic & Mysteries

The Brightblade
37

Mantis Rose
40

Shards of a Dragon Orb
42

Renegade Hunters After the War of the Lance
44

The Well of Talin
48

Mythic Might: Artifacts of the Lost Towers of High Sorcery
50

Lost Tales

Defeat in Kenderhome
63

The Journal of Falyrnthesal Haramdass
67

Gunthar's War Journal
74

The True & Faithful Account of Lord Toede's Campaign
76

Lost Music

Fanfare for Derek Crownguard
83

Old Solace
84

The Road to Foghaven Vale
86

The Gnome Song
87

Songs From Autumn Twilight

Qualinesti Hymn
91

Hymn to Takhisis
92

Hymn for Lavrana
93

Funeral Song for a Solamnic Knight
94

Song of Darkenwood
95

Battle Song of the Solamnic Knighthood
96

A Wedding Gift
97

Lost Organizations

A Kirath Wildrunner
99

The Knights of Balif
102

Shadow Wars
103

The Way of the Seekers
110

The Bardic College of Ergoth
113

Exploring the Mystery of the Bündesphar
116

Lost Lore

Flint's Jewelry
126

The Last Days of the Gnomish National Opera
127

Kender Courting and Marriage Traditions
132

Minotaurs of the Blood Sea
137

War Drums of the High Ogres
141

The Othlorx Curse
144

The Phaethon
147

Notes on Solamnic Feasting
154

Ten Reasons Why Kobolds Are Better Than Draconians
162

Lost Recipes

164

Trough Recipes page 174

Biographies

War and strife bring out the best—and the worst—in people. Some make their mark during the conflict, while others wait for a future day in which their stars will shine. Here you will find: a master of thieves, a lowly slave, a powerful dragonrider, a noble draconian, and more. Their stories will both disturb you and inspire you, but you will come away with something valuable from each as you continue on life's journey.

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Adrian Du Chagne: Palanthas' Lord of Lies

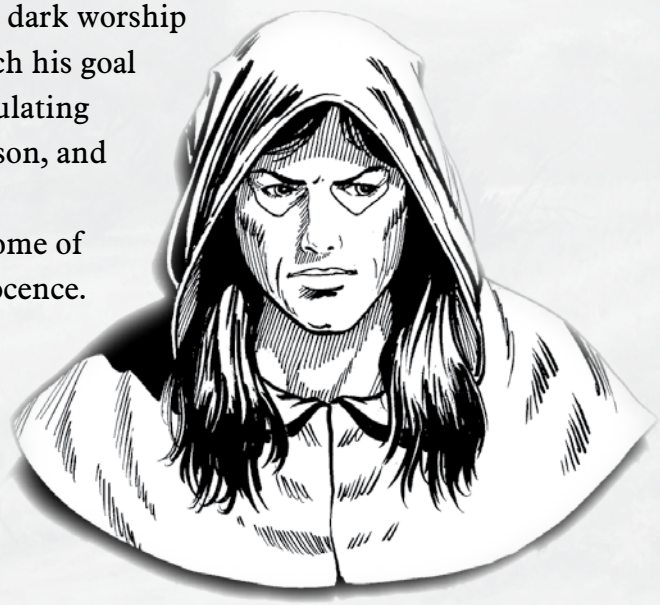
Excerpts from *Palanthas: A Biographical History*, by Stefanos, Aesthetic of the Great Library

Adrian Du Chagne was a noble-mannered resistance fighter who turned master thief. He was born in the Market District of Palanthas to unknown parents. Rumors spread about his father, a gruff looking fellow who ran an inn that was consumed in fire some years ago. No one knew what happened, but the City Guard discovered the infant Adrian—covered in ashes and hidden under the inn's front desk. Locals believed that the gods protected the infant, saving him from the fire.

Adrian grew up in the care of an adoptive family from Solanthus. His father, Ian Du Chagne, was an important steel merchant from the Hinterlund province of Solamnia who moved to Palanthas in 321 AC. Ever-increasing profit made Du Chagne one of the richest men in the city, his wealth supported by leases contracted with the Lord-Mayor of the city. The young Adrian lived in that world of double-dealings in which his father's enterprise thrived.

At sixteen Adrian's father died, so the young man picked up where his father left off. The great Commerce Guild, founded by Ian Du Chagne, took another road to success: that of the underworld and its black market. Already a full member of the Thieves' Guild, Adrian offered to help the Guildmaster hide its activities within his businesses. With the Lord-Mayor preoccupied with the coming War against the Dragonarmies and the City Guard forming the garrison at the High Clerist's Tower, the move went unnoticed.

During the winter of the war of the lance, Adrian called out to the gods to aid him in the next step of his career: mounting a coup against the Thieves' Guildmaster himself. His call was answered. It was then that Adrian took his first vow into the dark worship of Hiddukel, the Lord of Lies. The evil god told him how to reach his goal in a vision. He followed the divine instructions precisely, manipulating events to complete the plan. The Guildmaster succumbed to poison, and Adrian rose to take his place.



His ascension into the Thieves' Guild appeared legitimate. Some of Adrian's colleagues did not believe their new Guildmaster's innocence. Hiddukel warned him in a dream of an assassination attempt by one of his allies. The following night, the young Guildmaster waited patiently for his killer. The traitor was found dead by the City Guard in a back alley with a slit throat.

The Blue Wing of the Dragonarmies swept over Solamnia. Even before the Lord-Mayor decided to keep his neutral stance in the War, Adrian chose his side. What he did not

expect was the reward he would earn. The Lord of Lies whispered in Adrian's dreams, warning of domination of Ansalon by Takhisis. Adrian lead his men into a guerilla war on the plains of Solamnia.

Many battles were fought, but the guild's men did not take part in all of them. More important work was ahead of them as messengers, assassins—even as squires or spies in the Dark Queen's army. When the Thieves' Guild offered aid, the Solamnic Knights did not know who the Guildmaster was, nor the identity of his colleagues. Only a few even knew of these "allies." But they got results. Adrian also legally sponsored the war by financing nobles all across Solamnia. His enterprise offered resources much needed on the front lines: food, supplies, and weapons.

A week before the Battle of the High Clerist's Tower, Adrian was arrested by the City Guard and charged on three counts. First, he was accused of being the ringleader of an assassination conspiracy against the Lord Mayor. Second, the Palanthian authorities accused him of giving aid to the Solamnics outside of Palanthas—a felony because it had the potential to trigger a war that the citizens of Palanthas were desperate to avoid. The last accusation was being the author of a traitorous lampoon distributed in the inns and taverns across the city, proposing a citywide uprising against the "ineffective power in place." Of those accusations, Adrian was only guilty of the second. The others were merely inventions of his Thieves' Guild rival, Amothus Dale. Although summoned to justice, Adrian planned something else for his rival and left for the High Clerist's Tower.

Amothus Dale knew his fate soon after the Battle of the High Clerist's Tower, arrested as a spy for the Blue Dragonarmy. Adrian was rewarded for his aid during the conflict against Takhisis' Dragonarmies by the withdrawal of all charges against him. He was also granted the noble title of Earl. After the War of the Lance, Adrian continued his secret worship to the Lord of Lies. He remained Guildmaster of the Thieves' Guild of Palanthas and owner of one of the most powerful enterprises in Ansalon well into his declining years.

Earl Adrian Du Chagne's portrait now hangs in a side corridor of the Lord's Palace in Old City, depicting a tall, thin man in his mid-twenties who wears a distinguished black robe with gold lining. Written descriptions of him at the time spent as Guildmaster suggest that he rarely, if ever, wore these robes of office, preferring a black woolen cloak with a hood.

Nagash, Lightning Draconian

Nagash, like many noble draconians, spent the waning years of the War of the Lance in martial training and slavery. After he freed himself from the Dragonarmies, he had a long and successful career fighting the forces of Darkness across Ansalon.

It was after he won his freedom that he began occasionally writing his memories, thoughts, and musings in a journal. Reportedly laconic in person, Nagash had a tendency to ramble in writing; his journal is not a daily diary, but rather a collection of essays on subjects he was pondering at the time he put pen to paper. This article contains a few selections of interest to those studying the plight of noble draconians during the War of the Lance and its immediate aftermath. The unabridged volume is available to scholars at the Library of Palanthas.

–Kiro Dorova, Tower of High Sorcery at Wayreth

An excerpt from the entry "Of my Own Creation."

It is painful for me to bring to mind, but I remember a great deal of the ritual of my own creation, and it seems of such vital importance to history that I believe I should record it here, despite my own misgivings about reliving the ordeal.

When I awoke for the first time, I did not even realize that I was awake at first. I was aware that I had been hearing a voice chanting; I do not know for how long. I opened my eyes, and found three creatures standing over me.

Two were small, wearing black robes, chanting in strange languages. The third—an enormous creature, terrible but familiar—glowed red with malevolence. It opened its mouth and spat on me, then spoke in a language I instinctively understood: "Awaken, my cousins," it growled. The hideous beast's words were a soul-crushing curse that filled my heart with vile corruption, and I recoiled in horror.

I think I passed into unconsciousness once again. I could see nothing, but I was aware of impossibly immense voices, not the wretched creatures I had heard before. The first voice was somehow both repulsive and irresistible: "These new souls please me." It was mad with malignant greed, eager to gain possession over more living creatures.

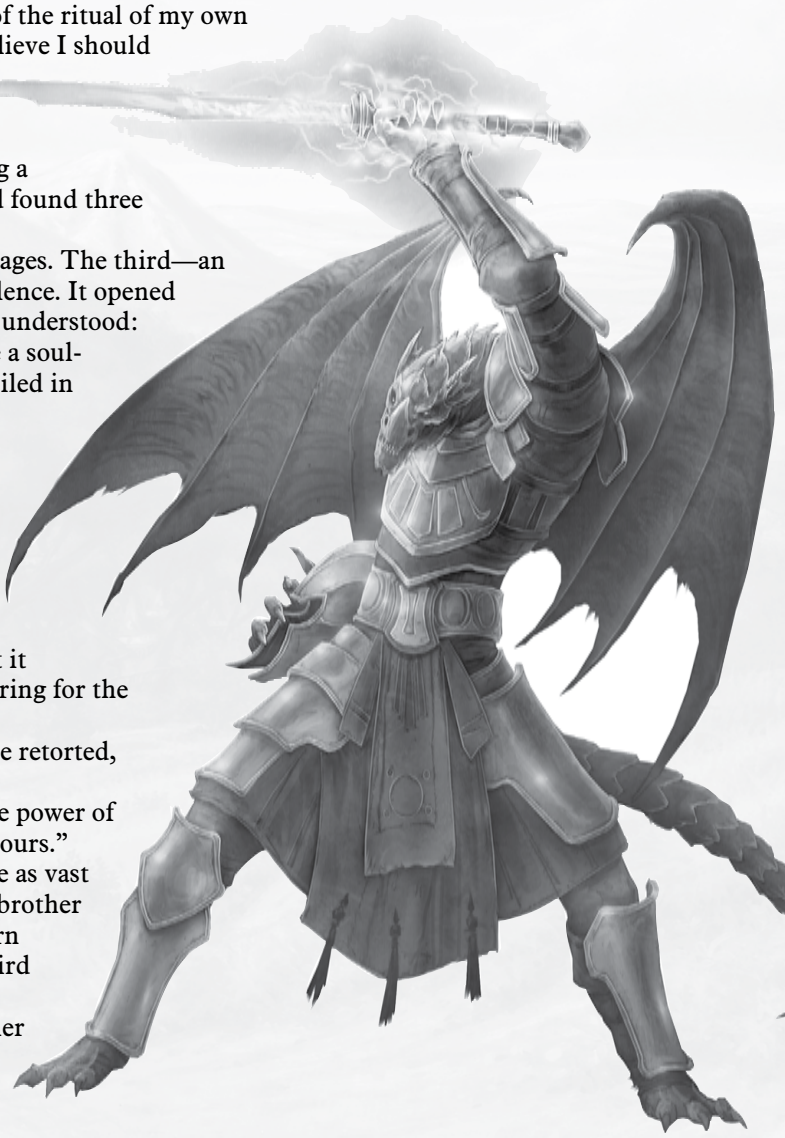
But another voice interrupted: "No, dear sister." This voice was very different, filled with such brilliant glory and nobility that it burned my soul—yet I craved more, every fiber of my being clamoring for the voice's purifying radiance. "You have overstepped your bounds."

"You are not welcome here, dear brother. Depart," the first voice retorted, inky hatred dripping from each word.

"I come to claim my children," the second voice countered. The power of its words was agonizing, but I rejoiced in it. "These souls are not yours."

"The law of the Most High is clear," added a third voice, a voice as vast as everything that has ever happened and ever will happen. "Your brother speaks correctly. The Balance must be satisfied. As Darkness is born of Light, so must Light be born of Darkness. Stand aside." The third voice's serene clarity calmed my fear.

"I will not," the first voice spat defiantly. Even so, I could feel her waver.



"You must, dear sister. I do not forget my own." The majesty of the second voice seared my heart, burning away the residue left by the foul ritual of my creation.

The voices faded.

Time passed; again, I know not how long. Perhaps it was mere seconds, perhaps centuries. Finally, I opened my eyes, and the black-robed figures and terrible creature were there. My heart sank in despair, crying out for the noble presence that had claimed me a moment—a lifetime—ago.

It answered, silently, in my mind. "Do not fear, though you rest among the enemy," the beautiful voice assured me. "I do not forget my own.

"You are mine," Paladine said to me.

Excerpts from the entry "Of Tarrin, my Brother and Friend."

I was among the first few created, along with my brother Tarrin. Lord Ariakas referred to Tarrin when he coined the name of our race—"Strong and noble, these draconians," he said. We called ourselves noble thereafter.

Tarrin and I grew close as we grew together. He was a good friend; he was the cleverest of the pair of us, and knew the day would come when our masters discovered that we belonged to Paladine, not the Dark Queen. He told us to be ready for that day, to do whatever we needed to do to survive, and that Paladine would remember us and not abandon us…

…He advised us all, and me especially, to pay lip service to the religion we were being indoctrinated with. Kowtow to the idols and icons of Queen Takhisis, he said. Pray to her with our lips, and to Paladine with our hearts. His advice kept us alive…

…Tarrin was a gifted warrior. In our combat training, only Tarrin was stronger than I. Even at a young age, he could lift the largest of the great blades, and he used his size and the momentum of the weapon to best any of us, and he even began to outfight the combat instructors. We all became skilled with our blades, but Tarrin was by far the most gifted, blessed by Paladine…

…During the time of our slavery, Tarrin and I passed many hours together in conversation. At the time, we mostly spoke to each other in Nerakese, as was enforced by our masters, but he encouraged me to continue practicing Draconic, which we both instinctively understood from the time of our creation. He said it was a gift from our dragon parents, one of the few worthy gifts they gave to us.

We composed oratory, choosing words which sounded pleasing together even if the matter of the words was unpleasant (I later learned that this was called "poetry"). We promised each other to keep journals of our trials and triumphs once we were delivered from slavery, so that our stories would live on. We poured the despair and the lamentations of our captivity and the Dark Queen's Curse into our compositions, rather than allow it to fester in our hearts. We begged Paladine for deliverance in our words so that our souls could be patient, for we trusted that someday He would fulfill the promise He made us upon our creation and make us instruments of His will…

…Only a month or two after we arrived at the mine, humans mounted a raid on the facility. Tarrin, together with Sorin and Urra and a few others, were in a position to use the commotion to escape. I could not—I had been confined in chains since the previous evening as punishment for some minor transgression—but I urged him to go without me. He was reluctant, but I promised him that we would meet again someday, even if it were at Paladine's feet at the end of days. That is the last I have seen of Tarrin. Later I heard that he traveled briefly with Gilthanas the Elflord; I do hope that was truth rather than rumor, for none of us could have hoped to find a more noble and worthy mentor.

Excerpts from the entry "Of my Captivity."

Early in our lives it came to pass that the priests of Takhisis entered our chamber, with the hobgoblin and base draconian guards, and placed several of us in irons: Tarrin, Sorin, Urra, me, and several more besides. Until this time we had been undergoing training as warriors, to fight in the great war that Queen Takhisis was waging upon the world, and we were only confined in chains when we had done something to displease our masters. Having satisfied our masters in our most recent lessons, we were confused as we were led away.

Months later I learned that, soon after we were taken from the temple, they slaughtered many of those remaining. Only a few handfuls of each of the noble races survived…

…Physical discipline had been part of our training previously, but they had stopped short of causing serious injury; this time they did not. Our legs and hands bound in chains, and our mouths muzzled, they beat us savagely with cruel weapons under the watchful eyes of some of the priests. One baaz draconian viciously stabbed me in the midsection with a hooked spear. I doubled over, bleeding profusely. I knew I would die without assistance, and it seemed I was unlikely to receive it. Involuntarily placing

my shackled hands over the wound, I prayed to Paladine to help me, somehow, in some way—and the wound closed. Paladine healed me. This enraged the priests who were nearby, who shouted "Blasphemy!" and ordered the guards to take care that I did not do that again…

…They would not tell us where we were, although I could tell it was a mine. Our taskmasters were no longer draconians, but hobgoblins and humans. I believe it was Neraka, given their manner of speech. As we were now known to be servants of Paladine, we were unfit to fight for the Dark Queen's army; however, we could be forced to labor for it. We were made to draw iron out of the ground and smelt it for the war effort. No longer soldiers in training, we were slaves, for our strong backs and tough hides would allow us to work deeper and longer than the more delicate humans could.

A foolish youth, I was uncooperative, combative, and made a general nuisance of myself. My taskmaster gave me a new name: "Worthless," or Nagash in Nerakese. Many others received similarly derogatory names. They were trying to break our psyches, but we would not let them. I embraced my new name, resolving to turn it into a cruel joke at their expense someday, and I have carried it since…

…We could tell that the war progressed poorly for our masters. The grumbling guards complained that they knew not where they would get the warm bodies to wield the weapons and armor that our iron made. They treated us cruelly, demanding more and more; I believe that they feared that if they seemed inefficient in their administration of the mine, they would be reassigned to the front.

Since Tarrin, Urra, and Sorin had escaped over a year previously, they forbade the slaves to speak to one other (to prevent conspiratorial planning, presumably) and I was frightfully lonely. One day I had simply had enough, and Paladine granted me the courage to act. When my irons were removed as I was changing tasks, I assaulted my taskmaster and freed myself.

Given the opportunity to escape quickly and quietly, I was sorely tempted; freedom beckoned, only steps away. But I realized that I had the opportunity that Tarrin did not have; I had time to free the others. If I simply slunk away into the shadows, I would be living up to the name my taskmaster had given me. I steeled myself, certain that Paladine claimed me for a greater purpose than that.

I will spare this journal the details, which were terrible and bloody. I slew many evil men and hobgoblins that day, but freed dozens of my fellows. We left the mine burning. I armed myself with the weapons of my former captors, and embarked on the next chapter of my life.

Editor's Postscript:

Nagash vanished in the Desolation soon after the War of Souls; it is presumed he fell in battle. Prior to his disappearance, Nagash entrusted his unfinished journal to a young resident of the ruins of Kenderhome, who later generously donated the volume to the Library. It is filled with dozens upon dozens of journal entries, which offer unique and deep insight into the noble draconian mind and experience.

Crucible in the War of the Lance

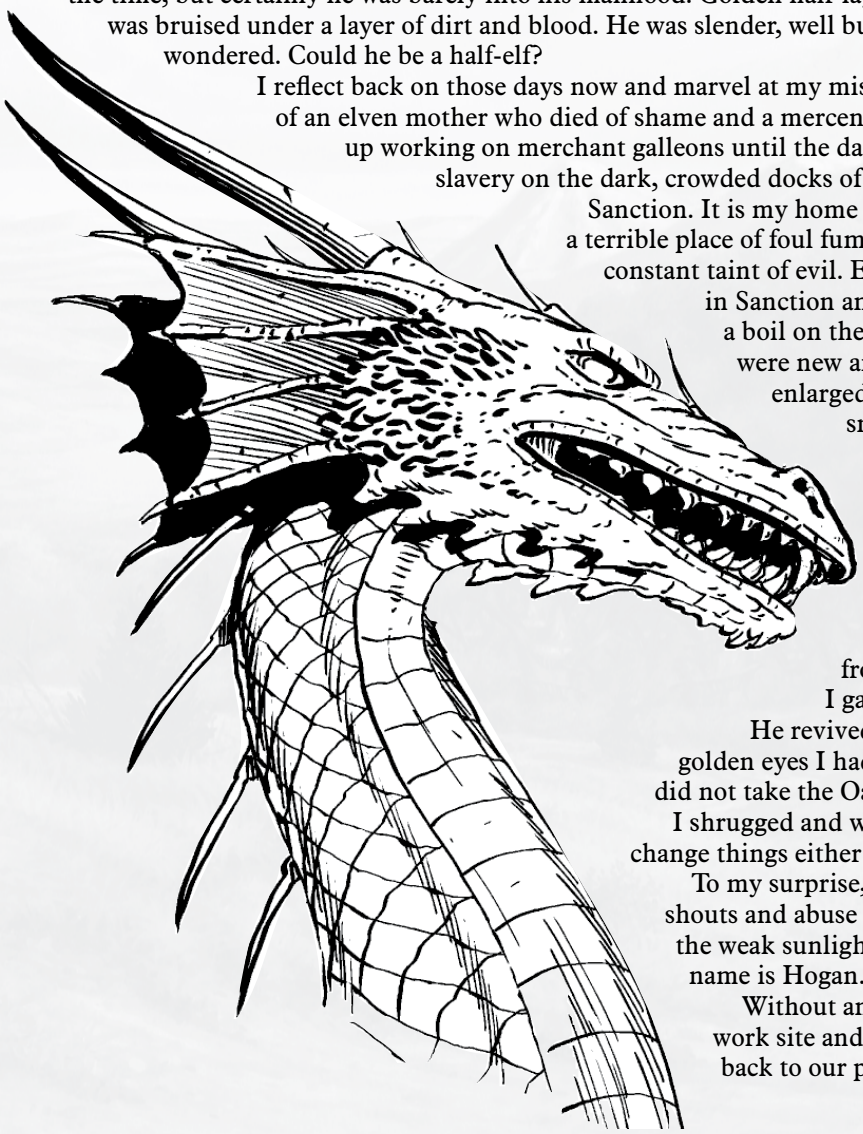
From the Memoirs of Kammerin Half-Elven, Harbormaster, Port of Sanction

He told me he had not taken the Oath.

I did not realize the significance of the statement at the time since a man delirious with pain and exhaustion delivered it to me. It was not until days later that I understood the full import of his words.

The man was dragged by soldiers of the Red Dragonarmy into the slave quarters one night and dumped, more dead that alive, near my scrap of fetid floor. He lay silent and unmoving for some time while other slaves stumbled over him, cursed him, or ignored him. In the foul prison we slaves called home, few had the strength left to pay attention to the suffering of another.

Yet there was something about the new arrival that intrigued me. He was not well dressed. In fact his, plain travel clothes looked worn and filthy and hinted of Khurish origin. Yet he didn't resemble the men of Khur. Even slumped on the floor as he was, I could see he was tall and his face appeared young—not as young as mine, for I was only a boy at the time, but certainly he was barely into his manhood. Golden hair lay matted under a lump on his head, and his face was bruised under a layer of dirt and blood. He was slender, well built, and lithe as a fencer. Could he be like me? I wondered. Could he be a half-elf?



I reflect back on those days now and marvel at my misery. I was young and alone, the bastard half-breed of an elven mother who died of shame and a mercenary who captured her and never let her go. I grew up working on merchant galleons until the day pirates captured our ship and sold the crew into slavery on the dark, crowded docks of Sanction.

Sanction. It is my home now. However, in that tumultuous summer, it was a terrible place of foul fumes, lava flows, overcrowded streets, gloom, and the constant taint of evil. Emperor Ariakas had gathered his Dragonarmies in Sanction and the Dark Queen's Temple of Luerkhisis sat like a boil on the slope of Mount Thunderhorn. Oh, the buildings were new and the harbor had been dredged and its docks enlarged to accommodate the armies, but the city was dirty, smoke-ridden, and built with the blood of slaves.

I was not thinking about the city that long ago night, only my small space on the floor by the tiny barred window and the wounded man that might have something in common with me. I finally screwed up my courage and dragged him over to my place by the wall. I used a little of my precious water and a scrap from my ragged shirt to clean his battered head, and I gave him the rest of the water to drink.

He revived enough to open the most compelling pair of golden eyes I had ever seen, swallow the water, and say softly, "I did not take the Oath," before he fell unconscious again.

I shrugged and went to sleep. Either he lived or died. I couldn't change things either way.

To my surprise, the man was awake in the morning. He rose to the shouts and abuse of our guards and silently followed me outside. In the weak sunlight the man looked down at me and nodded. "My name is Hogan."

Without another word or complaint, he went with us to the work site and labored until the sun set and the guards drove us back to our prison. With the passing of days his injuries healed

and his strength returned. I was amazed at how quickly he regained his vigor in spite of the beatings and starvation we all faced.

Although I burned with questions, I did not pry into his life until he offered to talk in the dark hours of the night. He told me he was searching for a friend, his mentor and guardian, a man named Claric. Claric had last been seen in the Khalkist Mountains. Hogan had been searching in the mountains east of Sanction when a group of Red Wing dragonriders surprised him. In the ambush he had been knocked unconscious and brought to Sanction to join the hordes of slaves that built and labored to support the Dragonarmies.

As I listened to him, I got the strong impression he was only biding his time before he escaped to continue his search. I made up my mind then that, if the opportunity came, I would escape as well too. I asked if I could go with him, but then he did a strange thing. Lying flat on the stone floor of the prison, he pressed his ear flat to the floor and closed his eyes. I thought he had fallen asleep, until after a while he lifted his head and winked at me.

The next morning, the wind shifted from the south to the southeast and blew a pall of smoke and ash from the Lords of Doom over the city.

Hogan gave me an enigmatic smile as we trudged after the guards to our latest site, an old stone temple to the gods that had fallen into ruin. We were collecting the stone for other construction projects and tearing down the temple. The gods had abandoned Sanction to Takhisis, who tolerated no other temples than Her own. The work was brutal and dangerous; the overseers gave us few tools and cared little if we survived. There were plenty of slaves to be had in Sanction.

My friend seemed distracted during the day, peering constantly into dark crevices and studying the ground with his golden eyes. Twilight came early that day, for late in the afternoon Mount Thunderhorn suddenly spewed forth a new column of smoke and more lava glowed on its summit, brighter than the sunset.

The guards looked up the mountain as smoke darkened the sky, and Hogan said softly, "Let's go."

He tensed, his knees bent, his legs poised to run, when his attention was diverted by voices suddenly raised close to our work party. A party of soldiers and their officer passing by the temple had stopped to examine the slaves. I had heard that Dragonarmy officers occasionally took slaves from the work gangs for their own purposes, but I had not seen it happen until that night. The soldiers had already pulled out one young man, and I realized with a jolt of terror that they were talking among themselves and pointing to me. Beside them, a lady had joined the group and struck up an argument with the officer, a tall, muscular man in dragonriding leathers.

Hogan's entire stance changed from flight to an intense, wary investigation of the woman. I might have understood in different circumstances. She was incredibly beautiful, young and slim, with red hair the color of flame-touched chestnuts. Her elegant dress was red, too, and fitted to a figure that would catch any man's eye. But this was not the time, I thought, and I did not see the reason for his sudden, consuming interest. The girl was annoyed with her officer, that was certain, and her voice lifted above the noise of the work gang.

Then her eyes shifted slightly and caught sight of Hogan staring at her. Her anger abruptly dissolved into curiosity and several other emotions that played across her lovely face in swift succession. Her companion caught the look, turned to see at whom she was staring, and frowned.

"Time to go," murmured my friend. He yanked my arm and darted into a dark gap in the tall pile of masonry, pulling me after him. Shouts rose behind us. We jumped and slid down a collapsed wall into a dark chamber in the floor below. Another crevice yawned before us, and he led me into the depths of the old ruin. The light faded behind us. I lost all sense of sight, but Hogan's vision in the dark was keen, and he led me on through the shattered floors.

Going underground was not the path I had imagined for us. Where was there to go? The rubble or the foundation would trap us eventually. And yet it did not.

Cracks or gaps appeared before us while we twisted and climbed our way down into the lower levels of the temple. Soon we groped our way into a small chamber partially blocked with fallen stone and earth. There was no sound of pursuit, so Hogan murmured a soft word and formed a pale sphere of light between his hands. I stared at him in surprise. So, he was a wizard. That explained some, I thought. But not enough.

"How did you know?" I asked. "Where are we going?"

"Underground," was all he would tell me.

Before us yawned a steep staircase that plunged down into total darkness. He handed me the wizard's light, and to my astonishment, he pulled a large chunk of fallen stone and masonry over to the stair's entrance, blocking it from view. He took the light and led the way down the stairs.

Underground we went, deeper than I ever imagined we could go under a city like Sanction until to my wondering eyes appeared a lengthy tunnel and signs of some sort of habitation.

Hogan said something in a language I did not understand, and then added, "Shadowpeople."

I was stunned. Shadowpeople were creatures of legend. Shy, elusive, and territorial, they lived in clans in subterranean communities and avoided humans whenever possible. "I don't think there are many left. They have been hunted and abused. I smell death and abandonment."

"Really," I retorted. "What does that smell like?" I know I was being rude to the man who had just saved my life. All I can say is I was tired, frightened, confused, and very tired of mysteries. Hogan chuckled. Perhaps he would have answered my questions then and there, if we hadn't walked through an open arched doorway into a cavern of towering proportions. Bones lay scattered on the floor, and scorch marks marred the stone.

"A shadowhall," he said.

"Yes. You made excellent time finding the place," a voice echoed out of the ebony darkness.

Hogan did not flinch, but I nearly leaped out of my skin. I whirled to see another light form across the cavern. Its bright light gleamed on red hair and a slim form in a crimson dress. Cool and unafraid, the girl from above walked toward us. Ignoring me, she circled Hogan, her delicate nostrils flared and her full mouth pursed in concentration.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"I know you," he said calmly. "I had hoped to avoid this meeting. I am only looking for Claric."

She must have recognized the name for she laughed. "Clarion? That busybody? Sticking his bronze nose in everyone's business." She sighed and waved a slim hand. "He was here. Stars above, this place has been like the skies over the Dragon Isles lately."

Her reference startled me. The Dragon Isles? What did that mysterious place have anything to . . . do . . . with . . . A thought formed in my head that sent a cold wash of fear through my limbs.

"So I heard," Hogan was saying. "The Oath has been broken."

A spasm of anger marred her face. "I am not surprised. It was a heinous thing to do. I am glad the silver dragon found the truth."

"What oath?" I asked.

Hogan ignored me. "You objected?"

"Of course. How could any of our kind condone such a perversion?"

"Our kind? What oath?" I stammered.

"Many have," Hogan said, his voice cold. "If you are so horrified, why did you do nothing to stop it?"

"I did not know until my rider boasted of it and those warped creatures began to crawl out of the temple. I told Lord Ariakas such an act would prove disastrous. He did not agree."

I admit I was terrified. I knew then who the beautiful redhead was, but at that moment, I began to doubt Hogan. Somewhere in the distance, the volcano rumbled, and the ground trembled under my feet.

The girl suddenly smiled and to my horror, I saw flames leap in the depths of her eyes. "So you know who I am, but I do not know you. Nor, it seems, does your little friend." She laughed again and slowly circled around us.

Hogan turned with her, keeping her in his vision, his face the grimmest I had seen yet in our brief friendship. "Kam," he said to me. "Back away."

Back away where? I remember thinking. Except for the two lights that burned like glowing eyes in the darkness, I could not see a thing. I didn't want to move blindly into that unknown cavern.

Something moved overhead. I heard what sounded like the scratch of claws on stone, and then something large and hairy swooped down from the roof of the cavern and grabbed my arms. Something leathery beat downward. My stomach dropped to my knees as the creature yanked me off my feet and carried me into the unseen depths of the cave. I heard Hogan shout my name, but I was too stunned to reply.

A shout of frustration echoed through the cave, and a brilliant burst of red light flared behind me me. I looked back in terror into the opening jaws of a red dragon. As I had feared, it was Firestorm, the red dragon who lived in a lair on the slopes of Mt. Thunderhorn. Her spiny head lifted toward me, her wings partially unfurled, making her look larger in the great cavern. Dragonfear hit me in a ferocious wave, and I screamed in terror.

Then another light flared and scintillated on the pale stone of the cave. I had one brief glimpse of another shining dragon before I was carried out of the cavern and into a maze of high tunnels, caves, and passageways.

I quickly realized my captors were very adept at traveling through the subterranean tunnels. Leaping and gliding with ease, two of them carried me in a dizzying journey away from the shadowhall and toward the source of the rumbling noises. I tried to struggle, but the creatures were incredibly strong and, I quickly learned, very intelligent.

Be still, young one. We will not hurt you. The words formed in my head without passing through my ears. I stopped fighting out of sheer surprise.

"Who said that?"

We did. We are taking you away from the red dragon. We hope the bronze will follow us.

I stared at the strange faces with their upturned noses and huge eyes. Recognition finally came. These were shadowpeople, the denizens of the lightless caverns. My head swam with confusion. "What? What bronze?" I cried.

The creatures slowed and came to a stop in a cave that I saw must be near the volcano. They let me down to the cave floor but kept their powerful hands on my arms. Unending tremors shook the floor under my feet and the distant rumble had changed to a deep roar. Heat assailed me, and the smell of molten rock filled the cave. *You are his friend. He will follow. Then we can ask him for help*.

"Who are you talking about?"

The words formed slowly in my head as if the shadowpeople were talking to a very slow child. *The man with you is a bronze dragon named Crucible. We have seen him before. He is very adept at changing shape*.

My mouth fell open. No wizard. Just a metallic dragon. Dear gods. Word had trickled down, even into the slave pits of Sanction, that the good dragons were returning from their long exile. I had never thought to see one. "Why would he follow just for me?" I asked, thoroughly confused and out of my depth. "Besides, Firestorm will not let him go."

Two, dark hairy heads looked at each other and nodded. *Bronzes are loyal to their friends. If he can, he will come.*

"So go help him! Then maybe he will feel like helping you!"

We cannot. We have a tentative truce with the red one that we cannot break. And so I sat in the stifling darkness between two manlike creatures out of tales and waited for another creature out of legends to fight an evil dragon and come rescue me. I honestly did not believe he would come. The red dragon was a fearsome foe, and Hogan had to fight this one in the confines of stone and darkness. He told me later, that in spite of Firestorm's familiarity with the tunnels and caves, the earth around him proved to be to his advantage, not hers. The big bronze dragon was a geomancer who understood the ways of stone and the forces and powers of the earth. After exchanging several bouts of dragon breath, Hogan lured the red into a tunnel and used his magic to bring the stone crashing down around her. Blocked off from her prey, she bellowed her fury, bringing down more stone on top of her. She was still cursing him when he left her to follow the scent of the shadowpeople and one very frightened half-elf boy.

As the shadowpeople hoped, Hogan followed and came upon us in the thundering cave under the cone of Mt. Thunderhorn. Seeing I was still alive and unharmed, he approached carefully and bowed his horned head low. The two creatures replied in kind.

"Thank you for saving my young friend," he said, and I startled, for I had not thought of their act in that light.

Crucible, we know your powers can be used to control a volcano, I 'heard' the strange folk tell Hogan. *We need your help. This mountain is threatening our remaining clanhold.* He bowed again, and while I stared in awe at the elegant, shining bronze dragon, he gathered the tremendous powers of the earth and stone and diverted the magma to a new path that flowed around the last hall of the shadowpeople and into a harmless channel. When he was done, he shifted back into human form and bowed again to the shadowpeople. They thanked him quietly, and told him where to find Firestorm's lair and a tunnel that led south under the mountains. With a flip of their wings, they were gone as quickly and silently as they had appeared.

Hogan grinned at me. "You look as exhausted as I feel. Are you up for one more walk?"

I wasn't going to say no, so I followed him silently through the tunnels to a crevice that led out onto the mountain's flank. He found a broad ledge and the entrance to Firestorm's lair and went inside. He sealed the opening to her treasure cave. Hogan came out, chuckling and looking satisfied.

"If she gets herself out of that cave-in, she will have a difficult time opening that cave. Perhaps . . ." his voice trailed off.

I swayed with weariness, but I had to ask. "Perhaps what?"

He glanced down the mountain at the lights of the city below. "Perhaps in time I will come back and claim it. It should go to some good use."

I nodded. "Why did you come back for me? You could have just left."

He turned his golden eyes on me and said, "You shared your water with me. Not many people would have. That is a virtue that should not be allowed to disappear."

At the time, I didn't know why I said the next sentence, and yet I meant it with all my being. "If you come back, I will follow."

He smiled and led me back to freedom.

Crucible did eventually return to Sanction. It took time. After we escaped from the mountains, Crucible continued his search for Clarion and eventually caught up with the old bronze. Neither of them had taken the Oath that bound the metallic dragons to stay out of the Dark Queen's war, and they had waged a dangerous, clandestine fight of their own against the armies of Takhisis. They continued their efforts to thwart the Dragonarmies and to aid the forces of the good dragons through the long and difficult years that followed. Crucible fought in Nordmaar and Kern, and in the Chaos War he carried a rider into battle. He was badly wounded just before the climactic battle in the Abyss, and his rider was killed—an event that probably saved Crucible's life. When the throes of the Second Cataclysm finally settled in the dust, he returned to the cave above Sanction and found the red dragon's treasure still sealed in the cave. He assumed the name of Hogan Bight and turned his skills to repairing a town almost lost to evil and destruction.

I, too, returned. Fully grown, older, and wiser, I found him one day in the docks of the old waterfront and said, "These docks are a disaster. What do you intend to do about it?" He made me the Harbor Master that day.

Crimson Skies

A history of Count Albrecht Ravenmantle, master dragon rider of the Red Dragonarmy.
As told by Sir Corben Brayard, Warden of the Sword.

When I first saw Albrecht Ravenmantle in battle, I trembled in fear. The man was tall—taller than any man I had ever seen. His armor, the same type worn by all dragon riders in the Red Dragonarmy, shined bright red in the blazing sun, the symbol of a black raven upon his helm. Every bit as impressive was the red devil that he rode, the dragon Bloodburn. Never in all my years of service have I seen their match in battle. The two worked in tandem like few other dragon-and-rider teams in the War of the Lance, accumulating close to 33 confirmed kills—most likely more.

First Blood

The dragon shot forth from the clouds like a missile. His blood-red scales glistened in the sun, a beacon of fiery death. His great maw opened, revealing teeth and fire. To my right, I saw a silver dragon blasted by the wave of flames, with Sir Hamel holding on for dear life. The red turned as he passed, positioning himself so that his rider, a mountain of a man, had the opportunity to strike. The rider swung his barbed flail, driving into the underbelly of the silver as it turned. The cinch on the saddle, damaged by the strike, gave way.

Sir Hamel fell to his death. I have often wondered when exactly he died, whether instantly from the fear of falling, or if he was awake the whole way down. All these years later, I shudder at the thought.

We closed ranks as dragons and riders searched for the red. There was no sign. Our dragons grew restless, and it took everything we had to keep them in formation. We were so busy, we didn't look in the one place we should have—directly beneath us. The red dragon took advantage of our formation, using his claws in a deadly strafing run, twisting as he passed underneath to rake at the underbellies of our mounts. Our formation scattered as the red came back around for another attack.

I saw the rider again, tall and confident in his saddle. He moved with the dragon, guiding, directing. At that point I knew that while he was the one giving the orders, it was a co-operative relationship. The two worked in concert like nothing I had ever seen. It was at this singular moment that I knew that we could no longer think like cavalrymen. We had to think like dragons.

It was too little, too late. The red banked again, biting a copper where the neck met the body. As the copper was distracted, the rider swung his flail, tearing a hole through the membrane of the copper's wing. By this point, some of our knights and their dragons had regained their senses. They closed in on the rider. The red shot upward, pushing off the falling body of the copper dragon. Our dragons climbed, determined to catch the red. The red entered a heavy cloudbank, the good dragons not far behind. They emerged from the other side, but the red was lost to sight.

The red had purposefully stalled, allowing the metallic dragons to shoot past him even as he had turned downward. The red folded its wings against its side, coming at my dragon, Sylveridon, like a shooting arrow. We banked left, looking for an exit. If Sylveridon had not moved when he did, he would have lost a wing. As it was, he was injured, the claws of the red dragon ripping through membrane. Still, Sylveridon was able to fly, so we gave chase. We were closing in, when we were suddenly engulfed in magical flames. Dragons are said to be creatures of magic, and the red was no exception. The fireball spell caught us in the air, and we started to spiral downwards.

How we managed to land safely, I still don't know. Even at that, we were both seriously injured. I had found out that Sylveridon and I were the only survivors of our patrol. I swore on that day that I would hunt this rider and would slay both Ravenmantle and his dragon.

Know Thy Enemy

While Sylveridon and I were recovering from our wounds, who should pay us a visit than the Golden General herself! She shone like light, her voice a melody upon the wind. I have never seen such beauty before or since. She questioned me extensively about the battle, and I told her of my oath.

More casualties were coming in from the field, the result of the red dragonrider. The Golden General needed as much information about this rider as she could get. I was assigned the task of gathering information on our mysterious opponent.

I interviewed several knights and began gathering facts. The rider was a tall man, over six feet. He was adorned in red dragonscale armor, with a tall, open-faced helm. The top of the helm had the symbol of a black raven with a blood rose on its crest—our first clue as to the identity of our assailant. Other accounts showed this same symbol set against a red field.

I consulted with Lord Heinrich of the Order of the Rose, whom some have called "the Learned Knight." Had Lord Heinrich not been a knight, he surely would have been an Aesthetic at the Great Library. Upon hearing the description, he identified the heraldry as belonging to the Ravenmantle family from the Taman Busuk region. According to Heinrich, the family's only surviving member who fit the description of the dragon rider was the young Count Albrecht Ravenmantle.

Our enemy now had a name.

Tactics

I began to study the tactics of our foe. Several things were clear. The "Crimson Count," as my fellow knights called our enemy, indulged in hit-and-run tactics. Often he would make a strike, only to disappear into nearby cloud cover. Using the camouflage of the clouds, dragon and rider would "stall," allowing pursuers to fly by so that they could gain advantage against the metallic dragons.

The Crimson Count made use of his dragon's natural weapons. Beyond tooth, claw, and tail, the great red employed a blazing inferno of a breath weapon. Whenever our forces were in a line or a "flying-V" formation, that's when the red employed his fiery breath. The dragon also drew upon its natural ability to cast spells, perhaps its favorite being what the White Robes call a "delayed fireball." This is a ball of fire that deploys seconds after the dragon's passing. While the red is apparently immune to flame, the same was not true of silver dragons. However, our gold and brass dragons withstood the heat better than any others, indication that they should be our mounts of choice for tackling the Count.

Aeronautics

My superiors soon introduced me to Prop (short for Propellerfanusedfortransmittingpowerbyconvertingrotational motionintothrust), a gnome from the Guild of Aeronautics and Aviation, or the GAA for short. I was told that Prop was an expert in aerial battles, though I didn't know of any gnomish flying machines. Prop assured me that I was wrong, citing something about some sort of aerial contraption known as an "ultra-light."

I must admit that most of what Prop told me soared above my head. I'm still not entirely certain what a "vector" is. However, I learned much about flight, including information about wind currents, the angle of the sun…*

Historian's Note: This portion of Brayard's account has been damaged. In an attempt to fill in the gaps, we have requested a copy of Prop's notes on aerial battle. Officials at Mt. Nevermind have assured us that the request is in review by the Guild of Historical Warfare, and that we should have an answer in approximately 47 years.

-Ashe Lorefinder, aesthetic of the Great Library of Palanthas, 365 AC.

The Hunt Begins

I was soon able to make a full report to the Golden General, including a list of recommendations on how to combat the Crimson Count. I was surprised that she was not only impressed, but she also had recommendations of her own. Truly, she is as brilliant as she is beautiful. After further conference with Lord Gunthar uth Wistan, we modified our tactics and crafted a plan for hunting down the Crimson Count.

Little did I realize that I would be placed in charge of the hunt. Sylveridon had recuperated nicely, and we set out to create a force of dragon-hunters the world of Krynn had never seen. Including myself, we had a total of nine dragons with knights as their riders. We had two gold and six brass dragons, as well as Sylveridon. Though Sylveridon was more susceptible to the great red's fiery attacks than the other dragons, he and I were a team. Besides, I also held that the opposite held true and that the great red would be susceptible to Sylveridon's frost breath. We would see.

There was precious time for training, as more dragons and riders were dying every day. The count was over two dozen, and rising. In my research, I discovered that the Crimson Count liked to attack just before twilight, therefore we patrolled during those hours. Rather than a single V-wing formation, we broke into groups of three, with one lead dragon and two wingmates to protect their leads. It didn't take long for us to encounter the Crimson Count once again. And this time, we were ready.

The Count obviously felt invulnerable, as his attacks came across as bold and reckless. He ambushed from behind, strafing with the red's breath weapon. Using the brass and gold dragons here proved to be helpful, as no dragons were lost due to the dragonfire. The same could not be said for our knights. Sir Vincent Kinsington didn't even have a chance.

Our group broke formation, veering off in several directions at once. Third Triad broke left, veering at an almost vertical angle, then doubling back toward Ravenmantle. Second Triad broke right, veering straight up, curling around to attack the Count from above. Meanwhile, my own First Triad turned in mid-air, doubling back upon our assailant.

I could see that we took the Count by surprise, though he recovered quickly. The red increased speed, folding its wings against its side, and flew straight at the riderless gold dragon; Aureus. In a fit of fury, Aureus continued to aim for the red, falling for the Count's trap. I tried to signal the dragon, but he would not listen—rage blinding him to all else. As the two neared collision, I saw the red turn, claws and teeth ripping through the gold's wings. Aureus fell towards the earth below, joining his rider in the afterlife.

Historian's Note: Again, portions of Brayard's account have been lost. Through accounts taken from survivors, we know that Kinsington and Aureus were joined by Sir Allan Brighthelm and the brass dragon Burnn. Witnesses also claim that Brayard became ever-increasingly grim after this encounter with the Crimson Count. Brayard himself is reported to have destroyed records of the next few days of hunting the Crimson Count.

-A.L.

Crimson Death

Five days of hunting have led to continued failures. Though we have shown dramatic improvements in the skies, we still routinely meet with disaster. Since our initial battle, we have lost three additional riders, leaving us only four. The Golden General assures me that she will allocate more riders to my cause, though she is unable to spare any at the moment. My resolve is steeled, and I shall meet the Crimson Count one last time, in the skies of the Abyss if I must.

The Golden General presented me with the means to finally rid the skies of the Crimson Count—one of the fabled dragonlances. It was the first ray of hope we had since our hunt for the Crimson Count began.

Again we took to the skies, all of the lessons we learned the last few days in our hearts. I muttered a prayer to Kiri-Jolith that we would finally bring Ravenmantle to justice. I think this was the first time I had ever prayed, and it felt right to do so.

Again, we came upon the Count. I could tell, by his countenance, that he knew what weapon I bore. He kept a wide berth and focused on ranged attacks. For once, this proved to be unsuccessful. We broke off in separate directions, pulling a dizzying array of aerial maneuvers that Prop would be proud of. Yet despite our efforts, the Crimson Count was a dangerous foe and full of surprises. Wing and tail barbs adorned the great red, making him deadlier than ever. The dragon's claws ended in razor-sharp steel, allowing the dragon to inflict more damage.

The Count raised his weapon, which we dubbed the dragonflail, and it shone with an unearthly power. The end was shaped like a dragon's head, with barbed ears serving as its cutting edge. An unholy fire seemed to blaze from the maw of the draconic visage. The power of the attack hit Sir Thomas Raltheford hard, causing him to succumb to his fears. His dragon had no choice but to land with his rider.

The red came down for a strafing run against the gold, tearing it badly with metal-tipped claws. The gold was injured—gravely—and forced to land. Quickly, this battle's tide had turned nearly against us. I ordered the remaining brass dragon and her rider, Sir Jonathan uth Verek, to follow his wingmates and make certain they were safe. I faced the Crimson Count alone.

Seeing my advantage, I signaled for Sylveridon to charge at a steep angle towards the great red. Prop's lessons had taught me more than I realized, for Count Ravenmantle was taken by surprise. The two of us began a spiral ascent, circling around one another as we reached higher altitudes. Whoever climbed the highest would have the advantage. Sylveridon kept a respectable distance, outside of striking range of the red's claws. Unfortunately, the evil dragon's tail slashed out as we climbed, slamming into my left arm. A bone broke, and pain shot up into my body. Still, I had to hold on for dear life.

We entered a series of rain clouds above us and finally the advantage was ours. Sylveridon broke off, even as he unleashed his breath weapon—a blast of super-chilled air—towards the cloud and the dragon. The water contained within the rain cloud froze, unleashing snow and ice upon the red. The dragon sustained the brunt of the blast, and soon descended, weakened. We dove down in pursuit, Sylveridon's wings close by his side to allow for speed. As we gained, I aimed the dragonlance at our opponent. The lance held true, impaling both the Crimson Count and the dragon he rode.

The terror of the crimson skies had come to an end.

Historian's Note: Brayard's injuries were worse than even he realized at the time. Had he sought clerical aid immediately, he may have saved his arm. Unfortunately, the damage from the battle was too great. Brayard would never ride a dragon into battle again, though he and Sylveridon remained fast friends. The two developed dragon rider training techniques based on their own experiences as well as the methods of the Crimson Count. To this date, Count Ravenmantle remains Ansalon's most successful dragon rider.

-A.L.

Relics

Some say the gods abandoned the world at the time of the Cataclysm. The wise believe it was man himself who turned his back on the gods. During the gods' time of silence, much of their wisdom and many of their divine gifts were lost.

Legends of Istar speak of the Kingpriest's inquisitors gathering up the relics of all faiths and placing them in a former Tower of High Sorcery, now called the Hall of Sacrilege. The articles in this section provide a catalog of many of these relics, describing their origins and rumored powers.

Now that faith has been restored to the world, some of these divine relics may one day find their way into mortal hands, to serve man for good, evil, or the gray in between.

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Amulet of the Soul's Fire

Fire is change, and change is truth. Change brings both good and evil, but one must face it head on or risk never fully experiencing life. So say the kindred of Sirrion. This amulet was originally crafted as a gift to the Flowing Flame himself from a fiercely loyal worshiper. A despondent young noble, his family torn apart by war and betrayal, had spent years wallowing alone in self-pity and fear of the future. After witnessing the near-death of a cleric of Sirrion courageously saving people from a fire, he saw how the changes in his life, though traumatic and painful, had made him stronger. The new acolyte vowed to live his life to the fullest from that point forward and began crafting the amulet as a symbol of his commitment to live by Sirrion's principles.

The Amulet of the Soul's Fire is said to make the wearer immune to fear and to enhance the individual's greatest strengths, whatever those might be. It rewards bold action and assists the wearer in imperceptible ways whenever he or she tries something new. In places of great natural beauty or in the wake of great ravaging or destruction, the stone has been known to sing a poignant, heartrending melody. The song heals living creatures, moving most to tears, and burns away sickness, impurity, decay, and even rubble to make room for what the future will bring.

Bearers known to history include numerous followers of Sirrion, a smattering of bold politicians and warriors, a powerful dwarven Scion who used the amulet to increase his mastery over the elements, and a fallen Istarian paladin of Kiri-Jolith who, through many trials, was eventually led by the medallion back to his greatest strength—his faith. Humbled and respectful of the fire god's truths, the newly restored paladin brought the amulet to a remote temple of Sirrion at the edges of the empire. Unfortunately, he was followed by imperial scatas who, skeptical of his restoration, had him arrested for associating with pagans, destroyed the temple, and under order of the Kingpriest hid the amulet away in the Hall of Sacrilege where it presumably remains to this day.

The Amulet is essentially an ornate holy symbol of Sirrion made of copper and gold flames, with a hemisphere of sunburst-cut citrine nestled into its center. It hangs on a long golden chain, usually resting at the wearer's solar plexus, and is always warm to the touch.

The Beastheart

When the first elves had gathered and Silvanost was just shy of two centuries old, there lived in the young elven capital an even younger elfmaid. She was a scholar, researcher, and teacher, grateful for her life in the city but always nagged by feelings that something was missing. One day, daydreaming alone as usual, she felt an irresistible call from the forest beyond the city walls. Without telling anyone, and without provisions or supplies, she set off for what would be a long journey into the woodlands.

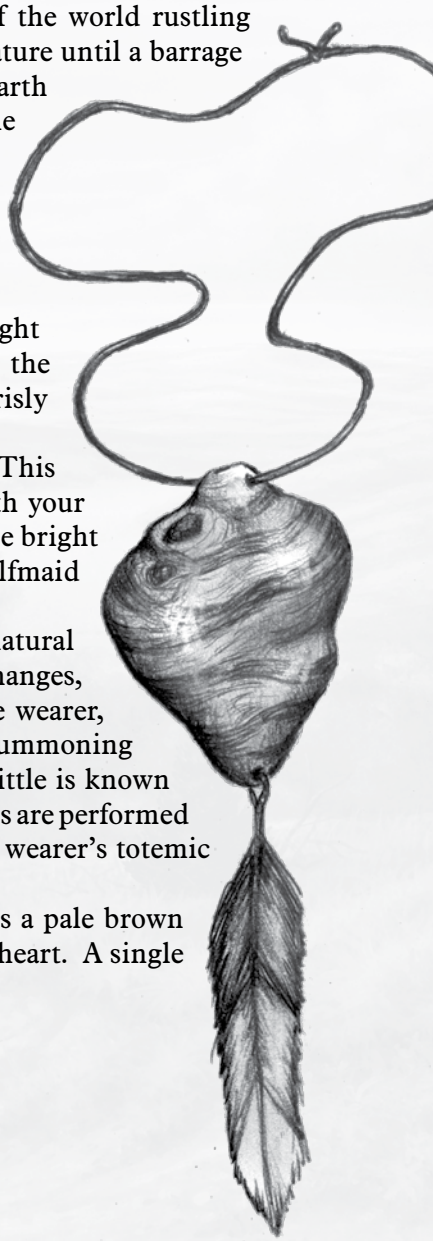
Deep in the wildwood, at the bottom of a steep hill, she found a narrow, overgrown path. She struggled upward until it began to level out and then emerged into a vast expanse of forest. She gazed upward as she walked, spinning circles as she marveled at the heights of the trees and the breath of the world rustling through their leaves. Soon she was running in exultation through beautiful, untamed nature until a barrage of scents carried to her on the breeze abruptly overwhelmed her. She smelled the moist earth around her, the lush greenery, and even tiny creatures hidden away in the foliage, and she smelled too the cool, ancient stone long before she came within sight of the weathered, hut-like shrine.

As she approached the tiny structure she heard a soft, regular pulsing and caught a scent she recognized as blood. Although her mind raced in alarm, something deeper within knew that she need not be afraid. The shrine was empty of furnishings and adornments. On the smooth earthen floor lay a beating heart wreathed in ivy with bright rivulets of silver blood flowing from it. Again her mind reeled in panic, shocked by the unusual sight, but she pushed her thoughts away knowing that this was not something grisly but something natural—and something she had been seeking all her life.

The stone walls of the shrine spoke to her then with a sighing wind as their voice. "This is your primal heart, daughter," they whispered all around her. "Become one again with your World Mother." As she reached out to touch it the heart transformed into a talisman. The bright blood became a feather and the ivy became a cord. From that day forward, the young elfmaid never set foot in a city again.

The Beastheart talisman is said to unlock the wearer's deepest instincts, awakening natural survival skills so they can make their way in the wilderness, sense and predict weather changes, and understand the tracks and movements of other creatures. The wind speaks to the wearer, describing terrain for miles around, carrying scents to them from near and far, and even summoning weather, as he or she desires. As the church of Chislev maintains few written records, little is known about what other powers the artifact might possess. Legends persist that if the proper rituals are performed under the red moon's brightest light, the talisman will unleash what Chislevites call the wearer's totemic or spirit animal form.

This artifact is a simple talisman of petrified wood on a leather cord. The "stone" is a pale brown striated with dark bands, and its river-smoothed shape resembles a miniature humanoid heart. A single exotic feather of green, yellow, and brown dangles below it.



Bloodthorn

This is a plain ring of dull grey metal, with a flat oval of red gold set in the middle of the band. From this protrudes a tiny needle, almost invisible to the naked eye. Consecrated to Morgion, it first appeared in Solamnia during the Age of Might; scholars assume it to be created by a high priest of Morgion in Caergoth to spread disease and further his lord's might. This may have been in retaliation for the healing miracles taking place in Istar at the time.

Evidence also exists that Bloodthorn was part of one of the numerous attempts to assassinate the Kingpriest. The plot was far more subtle than most – to introduce a plague into Istar, hoping to infect the Kingpriest or, if that proved impossible, to create enough fear amongst the populace that they would revolt, ending his reign. Had the plan worked, it would have garnered much respect for Morgion and his followers, doing what even Paladine could not: removing the Kingpriest from power. Knowledge of the ring reached the ears of the Church, and Bloodthorn was intercepted before it could enter the Empire, but it was too late for many of the people of Krynn. Death followed in the wake of Bloodthorn's journey across the continent. Only the supreme efforts of the Mishakite clergy blighted the spread of the rapidly blossoming plague. Bloodthorn is a most unpredictable and dangerous item, as it is very difficult to control the disease it generates.

The victim is pricked with Bloodthorn, but they barely feel it, so sharp and small is the needle. Once pricked, the victim is as good as dead, as the mark it leaves is almost undetectable and the victim will show no sign of infection for three days – by which time it's much too late to save them.

Onset is rapid. It starts with a heavy cough producing thick, grey, foul smelling mucous, then vomiting begins with an accompanying high fever. The last symptom is the eruption of pustules all over the body, seeping a viscous grey fluid, which burst with even the lightest touch. A painful death occurs within one day of the cough beginning. The cause of death appears to be the internal organs of the body breaking down and rotting, turning into the grey fluids seen all through the disease's progress. The pestilence is highly contagious, owing to the silent incubation period and the way it quickly spreads via any bodily fluid.

Bloodthorn may only be used once a day. Morgion's followers are immune to the effects of Bloodthorn. Symptoms are lessened in followers of Mishakal, with death occurring only 50% of the time, and they also cannot act as carriers of the disease. Those clerics who are infected but do not die suffer terrible permanent scarring from the pustules, should the disease reach that stage. No force on Krynn can heal these scars, not even the Lady Mishakal Herself.

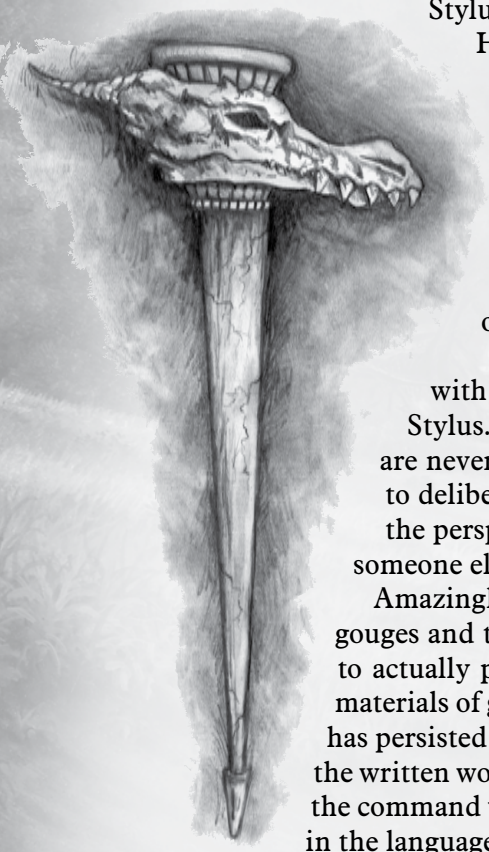
Bronze Stylus of Eons

This is a stylus of the kind used for writing on wax-covered Tablets. It has a bronze tip, and end cap, which is flat and used for scraping over what one has written. The handle is made from ivory, and is yellowed with age, showing hair-fine cracks here and there. The Stylus was once paired with a Tablet of similar make, but was lost during the Cataclysm. The Stylus has traveled the length and breadth of Ansalon and, some say, other places on Krynn as well.

During the Time of Knights, the Stylus and its companion Tablet came into the hands of Ogennes Palarem, who was inducted into the Order of the Crown in 1773 PC, a year after the founding of the High Clerist's Tower. Ogennes Palarem and his squire, Bran Gevornan, discovered a small monastery nestled in the Vingaard Mountains. The Stylus and Tablet were the only objects they dared to take from the crumbling monastery, and it was Bran who discovered several of the Stylus' powers. Since then, the Stylus passed through several generations of Gevornan and Palarem knights, but the fate of the Stylus does not begin or end with Solamnia.

The minions of the Kingpriest confiscated the Stylus and Tablet in 7 PC from the possession of Auglar Gevornan while Auglar was in Istar attempting to rescue his own daughter. Auglar was killed for resisting, and it was Auglar's daughter, and his squire, who brought news of his death and the theft of the Stylus and Tablet back to Solamnia. An old acquaintance of the Gevornan family was the archmagus Alfonsar Duskmere, who, greatly troubled by the loss of the Stylus, undertook a mission to recover it.

The Cataclysm did more than shatter the lands of Ansalon. History often forgets that there were people who suffered those times. The Palarem and Gevornan families were nearly extinguished because of that period, and in the same tragedy that consumed Istar, the Tablet was lost. Alfonsar, on the other hand successfully obtained the Stylus; he never spoke of the cost to himself that was required to acquire the Stylus. He did much to discover the Stylus' origins in the years that followed, and the old mage discerned that it had a divine purpose – a purpose to which its powers were inextricably linked.



Alfonsar took the Stylus with him on a journey to Palanthas, where he gifted it to the Aesthetics. The Stylus was examined by Astinus, but the chronicler did not apparently give it much weight in his thoughts. Several Aesthetics over the years have come into contact with it, and have used it on occasion, though it vanished recently. In its place was a medallion, the open book symbol of Gilean plainly etched onto its burnished surface.

The Stylus has several powers, the most obvious being that any writing done with the Stylus cannot be erased - except by the flattened end cap on the back of the Stylus. The marks, which are a silvery grey in color and cannot be called ink in truth, are never washed out by water or damaged in any way. Also, the Stylus cannot be used to deliberately pen false histories, or untruths – though what is truth often depends on the perspective of the writer. If anyone should try, the Stylus vanishes, and comes into someone else's possession.

Amazingly, the Stylus can write upon any flat surface, even star metal, leaving shallow gouges and the familiar silvery grey marks. To date, there have been no recorded attempts to actually physically damage the Stylus, but Alfonsar theorized that if it could write in materials of great hardness, than it must be very resistant itself, which would explain why it has persisted so long. The last known power of the Stylus is its capacity to copy any work of the written word upon which it is placed, in perfect spelling, grammar, and penmanship when the command word "record" is spoken directly to the Stylus. It copies the book or other work in the language in which the command word was spoken.

Eye of The Storm

A minotaur pirate captain, and little known devout follower of Zeboim, by the name of Garm Es-Talos ruled in the waters of the Northern Courrain ocean for years, uncontested due to his strong following of like-minded pirates and what many rumored to be the favor the sea goddess Herself. His power base was granted largely due to his masterful use of a brass astrolabe known as the Eye of the Storm, and the requisite tributes paid to the sea goddess in return for Her blessing. Those rumormongers didn't know how true that was.

True to a pirate's nature, it was greed that led some of Garm's rivals to make a deal with the Istarian navy. A deal to give Istar the head of Garm in exchange for some of Istar's ever increasing hordes of gold and pardons to enjoy that gold. The traitor pirates agreed to this arrangement too quickly, and realized too late that the navy played a gambit with them that paid off. After Garm was apprehended, a power vacuum resulted, leaving the remaining pirates to feud among themselves, making the clean-up job of the navy that much easier. Most of the pirates that remained were either sunken at sea, or apprehended. It was only a matter of time before the betrayers were imprisoned or executed. As for Garm, he died in battle, his body lost at sea. A seafaring tale tells of how Garm is a twice-cursed soul, damned to haunt the sea for all eternity for failing Zeboim and letting her artifact fall into enemy hands.

Once the remains of Garm's vessel were raided, it was discovered that the captain's astrolabe possessed strong enchantments, thus making for a very curious object to say the least. It was taken back to Istar where it was deduced that it was an artifact from the sea goddess Zeboim and inherently evil. Thus it ended up in the Hall of Sacriledge.

Just being a mariner's astrolabe intrinsically ties this item to use at sea, the domain of Zeboim. It's powers are wielded on the open water, affecting the water and weather patterns associated with the sea.

When a devout follower of Zeboim calls forth her name, and holds the astrolabe aloft, the caster's vessel comes to a halt as the waters around the vessel becoming eerily calm. The waters surrounding the vessel out to 400 feet begin to stir and toss, as a violent storm seems to spring up from nowhere, forming an impassable squall centered on the vessel, and spreading outward up to 3 miles. The storm persists until pursuing vessels either leave the area of effect, or are sunk.

The Gnomish Wrench of Reorx

A.K.A. The tool that is really useful and helps with a lot of different things

This wrench was made in the Age of Dreams during the time when the gnomes were settling Mt. Nevermind. It started out as just an ordinary wrench, passed from gnome to gnome, and the original creator, Engose, gave up on finding it ever again. The wrench managed to survive until the completion of the settlement in Mt. Nevermind, which was a miracle given gnomes tendency to blow things up.

During the final days of construction of the settlement, Reorx came to Engose in the form of a gnome and told him to go to the deepest levels of Mt. Nevermind. Engose did not know who this strange visitor was, but he decided to heed his advice, for he had a feeling that there was more to him than there seemed to be. Engose went to the deepest level of Mt. Nevermind, enduring the sweltering heat, and arrived at one of the areas where they were planning to build geothermal power stations in the future. Engose saw another gnome high up on a catwalk drop a wrench into the magma below. The gnome on the catwalk, without really thinking, jumped into the magma. Engose saw him do this, immediately appealed to Reorx for his protection, and jumped into the pool of magma after the other gnome.

Engose found that he was able to swim in the lava pool and was gladdened to see that the other gnome was miraculously unharmed. He grabbed the other gnome, dragged him out of the pool of magma, and made sure he was all right. Then, the wrench rose out of the magma and floated to Engose, who heard a voice speaking in his head: "For your faith in me, I reward you with this wrench, use it well, and never against your own people. Oh, and do try and keep a better hold of your tools, for I can't keep stepping in to save you every time you drop one." Engose took the wrench and looked at it with awe, as did the other gnome. Engose then used the wrench to complete the final few things that needed to be built in the mountain and he went on to become a legendary craftsman. Engose's inventions, like all gnomish inventions, had their redundancies and occasional drawbacks, were always of a grand scale and were wonders to all of Mt. Nevermind.

The wrench is the size of an ordinary gnomish wrench. It has images of gnomes at work engraved on it. It does not emit any light, or look in any way magical or blessed. To most it just appears as a very well crafted wrench. The wrench gives the user the ability to craft amazing devices and allows him to dodge even the fastest flying piece of scrap metal, flying glass, and other explosive byproducts of gnomish experiments. It grants the user the ability to not only work in any condition, but also avoid harm from mishaps that their own devices cause, as well as protect them from the elements. The wrench can enlarge itself at the user's command and be used as a weapon; it is especially effective as a weapon if used in defense of other gnomes.

Only tinker gnomes can use this artifact, and a gnome may never strike a fellow gnome with it. If a gnome ever attempts to hit another gnome with the wrench, the target will not be harmed and the gnome who struck the blow will find that the wrench has disappeared, taken away until a more suitable wielder is found.

The artifact came to be in the *Solio Febalas*, the so-called Hall of Sacrilege, during the late Age of Might. A group of Knights of the Divine Hammer had come to raid a small gnomish village that was said to harbor rebels who opposed Kingpriest Beldinas Pilifiro's rule. The small gnomish village held no such rebels, but the Knights went on and raided the village. A gnome named Furnace had come into possession of the wrench and used it to defend his fellow gnomes from the attacking Knights. He put up a valiant fight, taking down many Knights, but in the end he was killed. When the Knights realized how many of their own he had killed with just the wrench, they felt such a tool could have only been borne of the Gods of Darkness. Thus, they took it back to Istar where it found its way to the *Solio Febalas*.

Habbakuk's Au

This is a sharp, comb-shaped boar's tooth set in a handle of highly polished mahogany, six inches in length. The hard enamel surface is chased with silver in a fine network of whorls and lines.

The legend of the Au is a well-known tale told to young Kagonesti warriors on the eve of their first hunt:

"Early in the Age of Dreams when the Gods still walked with our people, a great hunt was held and dedicated to the God of hunting - Habbakuk, the Blue Phoenix. Many tribes came together in peace and joy, for this was before the founding of the nations of Qualinesti and Silvanesti, before the great troubles of the world began. But little did the hunters know the God Himself ran with them that day.

"The forest was bountiful, and when the hunt ended the most magnificent of the prey, a great boar, was offered in thanks to Habbakuk. A tooth was taken from the boar to make an au, a tattooing instrument. All who had participated would be tattooed with the new au that evening, bonding the disparate elves together in memory of the hunt. The ink was prepared, large fires were lit, and the first hunter approached the eldest Chief to receive his tattoo. The Chief looked upon this well built youth with striking blue eyes and wild black hair and fell to his knees – for he recognized the Blue Phoenix standing before him. Habbakuk smiled and proffered His arm, and with shaking hands the Chief tattooed the God. Habbakuk blessed the Au, still wet with His own blood, and strode away into the forest.

"Henceforth the Au was only used in the most spiritual rites to bestow powerful tattoos on those considered worthy."

The Au is passed down through the tribes of the Kagonesti, although it may be used to give a tattoo to any race. The person chosen to receive the tattoo must meditate alone in the forest for a day and a night. If Habbakuk deems them worthy He sends them a vision of an animal that becomes their personal totem. The tattooist uses the Au to tattoo the image of that animal over their heart.

The recipient gains a mystical trait bestowed by the spirit of the animal represented by the tattoo. If the recipient is a descendant of a hunter that took part in the original hunt with Habbakuk, the trait is even stronger. In times of great peril to their life, the tattoo leaves their body and becomes a spirit guardian in the form of the tattoo animal, with all the attributes of the regular animal it represents. Should the tattooed skin get permanently damaged, all effects are lost and the tattoo becomes just a normal tattoo, however frequently even scars and abrasions to the tattoo seem to completely heal. The following traits are common among the Kagonesti braves who have been tattooed by Habbakuk's Au:

Bear: The recipient gains the tough hide or great strength of the bear. Descendants of the original hunters also acquire the bear's intimidating presence.

Boar: The recipient gains supernatural endurance and stamina, and a heightened awareness of the forests around him. Descendants of the original hunters also acquire enlarged tusk-like teeth, with which they can inflict painful wounds.

Fox: The recipient gains the fox's cunning mind and ability to get out of the way of danger. Descendants of the original hunters also become faster and more agile.

Hawk: The recipeient gains the hawk's keen vision and reflexes. Descendants of the original hunters acquire the ability to utter a shrill war cry that breaks the concentration of their foes.

Snake: The recipient gains the ability to lock his gaze on his enemy, temporarily entrancing them, as well as a snake's swift reaction time. Descendants of the original hunter acquires venomous spittle, with which they can blind their foes.

Hiddukel's Dice

This looks like a pair of rough and fire-scorched bone dice, colored with red spots. Scholars believe Hiddukel himself blessed the Dice at the time of the War of the Lance, and entrusted them to a pair of Nerakan thieves who fought and died over the objects.

The Dice appear normal, but when used to gamble they often roll very well, giving the wielder great winnings. This great fortune is limited. Hiddukel has cursed the dice for those who get too greedy and raise the stakes too high. Once lulled into a sense of invincibility, the "luck" of the dice runs out at a critical moment for the gambler, leaving him with enormous debt.

Hiddukel then demands the soul of the loser, haunting him with horrific visions and worse until his debt is paid in full. If the gambler cannot pay and meet the terms of his wager, the gambler often meets an unfortunate end, driven mad by the visions or succumbing to an unfortunate "accident".

Rumor among taverns states that one of the previous owners of the dice was Lord Toede, who lost them gambling shortly before his (first) death in a hunting accident in Kendermore. While the church of Hiddukel disputes this, even they cannot deny the tales of woe that have been attributed to the Dice across the face of Ansalon.

Writings found by scholars state that the Scales of Shinare are directly opposed to this artifact, and that the two objects' fates are intertwined. If the two are brought together, the consequences of their union are uncertain but likely dramatic and far-reaching.

Shinaré's Scales

Shinare's Scales are a set of gold and silver weighing scales three feet wide, embossed with symbols of the Goddess of Wealth and Industry. The Scales have been identified as the weighing scales of one Solar Ponns, a wine merchant who played a large role in re-invigorating the Holy Order after the War of the Lance. The Scales are said to be blessed the goddess herself in tribute to one of her favored adherents.

The scales are normally housed in Shinare's temple in Solanthus, and are only removed from sight during the Golden Week (first week of Sirrimont) when the money-priests carry out their inventories. On the fifth day, a grand party is held in the temple, and the Scales are brought forth again for the new financial year.

Coins and other trade goods left on the Scales mysteriously disappear overnight, and more skeptical merchants believe that the church takes these offerings for their own profit. The faithful have attributed great changes in fortune and increases in profits to such offerings, as the Scales are reputed to be responsible for visions that often lead to great profit for Shinarites. Over the years, her clerics have used the Scales for a focus for their divinations.

It has been said that the Dice of Hiddukel are directly opposed to this artifact; see their entry for more details.

The Last Altar

The Last Altar is a single massive block of lead. Its top surface is engraved with the symbol of Chemosh and with several deep blood grooves spiraling out to the edges. Reliefs of pastoral life and merriment wait below these channels on the altar's sides, each scene conspicuously featuring a tombstone or cemetery. Sculpted, jawless skulls protrude from the reliefs to serve as both purchase for transport and hooks for sacrificial restraints.

In the Age of Dreams, as the first races of the world came to reflect upon mortality and suffering, many grew fearful of death while others became increasingly fed up with life and its limitations. Chemosh, drawn to these souls like a moth to a flame, offered them a way out. While many refused his overtures, some were enticed by his promises of endless life. He shared with them a vision of a world without pain and without end, with every last creature and plant blessed with his gift of eternal undeath. These early mortals formed the Heralds of the Undying World, a small but tenacious apocalyptic cult within the Lifebane's church. The Last Altar, originally known as the Altar of the Undying World, was his gift to them.

The altar served as the center of worship and proselytizing for the Heralds, and Chemosh taught them to use its powerful deceptive magicks for both worship and secrecy. It is said that any living thing that dies upon the altar's surface, be it human, elf, animal, or plant, is raised again as undead. No normal fire will burn within a mile of it, and all hope, morale, and divine magics are diminished in its presence. At the command of a cleric of Chemosh, enemies of the Lord of Bones can be slowed to a crawl, frozen in time, or even plunged into the Abyss itself. Further dark curses are rumored to exist, accessible through gruesome trial and error and especially with the sacrifice of beings strong in faith and beliefs.

The history of the altar follows that of the Heralds closely, waxing and waning in prominence through the centuries and reaching its most fanatical heights during the reign of mighty Istar. Imperial records from this time claim that the cult of Heralds—and indeed, Chemosh's entire church—was wiped out in a final confrontation and Chemosh's "last altar" was locked away forever. Followers of Chemosh scoff at this obvious error and snicker at the irony of the Istarians' words. They point ominously to prophecies that one day this artifact will serve as the last altar of the world upon which all gods but theirs will be sacrificed. On that day, the Gate of Souls will be sealed for eternity and Chemosh will rule all Krynn.

Majeré's Everlasting Rose

This is a single ordinary rose, deep red in color. When looked at more closely, it can be observed the petals are impossible to count and the rose seems difficult to focus on. Its scent is intense, but not overpowering. The Rose shows no signs of wilting though it has been in the world for centuries. Despite its seemingly fragile nature, it has survived being passed from monasteries to palaces to cellars to obscurity, through the hands of countless monks, nobles, and clerics. Where it is now, or if it is recognized as the treasure it is, no one knows.

The Rose acts as a meditation focus. When studied it appears to waver in the onlooker's gaze, but when the mind is relaxed and open, not studying the Rose but accepting its beauty, the petals have an almost hypnotic effect on the viewer. If the viewer has a certain issue they are pondering or a problem they wish to resolve but cannot think how to do so, an hour of meditation using the Rose will provide clarity of thought and the viewer's mind will usually become aware of a probable solution, one they may not have considered before, or thought unworkable. If the Rose cannot help find a solution, the viewer will still come away feeling more hopeful for a resolution, refreshed and calmed.

Mishakal's Grace

The half-ogre Kurthak Heimdell grew up in predominantly human civilization. Not fitting in due in no small part to his ogrish bloodlines, he took out his frustration by bullying other young men. After breaking his arm, he was too proud to ask for assistance, but knew that the local shrine to the healer he heard of would not turn him away. The priestess of Mishakal, Cindel Forsythe took Kurthak in, befriending him with her gentle, patient, and accepting nature and healed his injuries. Kurthak found someone that seemed to accept him, as he found himself returning to visit the priestess and becoming good friends in the process. In time, the preaching of Mishakal's ways started to sink in with Kurthak and he took those sermons to heart, becoming an acolyte of Mishakal in his own right.

Several years passed before Kurthak decided he wanted to see more of the world and spread the teachings of Mishakal. During those travels, he had a vision of a long lost and forgotten shrine to the Goddess of healing. Following those visions, he found the ancient shrine, and there found a circlet bearing the infinity symbol of Mishakal. Kurthak found that the circlet bolstered his own clerical powers as continued his journeys healing and teaching the ways of Mishakal.

Those journeys eventually led Kurthak deep into Istaran lands. Istaran soldiers accosted Kurthak, assuming the half-ogre was an evil being. When he professed to be a cleric of Mishakal, the soldiers could not believe him–how could one of ogre lineage who dare sully the reputation of the much revered Mishakal by telling such base lies? In the ensuing altercation, Kurthak was mortally wounded, as was one of the soldiers (in truth by the overzealous nature of his comrades). Kurthak's dying action was to heal the soldier of his wounds. With that final action, the soldiers realized the wrong they had perpetrated. Shamed and afraid of the consequences of what they had done, they burned Kurthak's body. The circlet, however, could not be destroyed. And so it was that the circlet was eventually placed within the Hall of Sacrilege in the hopes that the tragic event surrounding the artifact would not be discovered.

Mishakal's Grace is a thin circlet made of dragonmetal in a weaving pattern, with an infinity symbol completing the circle, worn above the wearer's brow. Aside from Mishakal's symbol being incorporated into the design of the circlet, the powers granted by the circlet play directly into Mishakal's virtues. Healing abilites, aiding others in time of need, and providing shelter are all documented manifestations of the circlet's power. Mishakite priests, bearing the circlet in battle, have been known to draw all hostitilies and threats to themselves, allowing their allies time to escape; such sacrifice has been the final use of Mishakal's Grace for many of those who bore it.

Obsidian Orb of Infinity

The Obsidian Orb of Infinity is a glossy black sphere approximately six inches in diameter. The Orb bears a small ivory disc on its surface with the black rune of infinity graven into the center. A clear crystal disc is embedded into the sphere's face opposite the rune, such that both discs cannot be viewed at the same time (unless the viewer uses a reflective surface). The Orb is considered a Mishakite artifact by some because of the rune for infinity, but it is in fact a relic of Zivilyn.

An unknown type of liquid is contained within the Orb, such that shaking it produces a light sloshing noise. Peering into the Orb via the crystal disc reveals only blackness, even if the researcher is aided by light-based magicks. Some have speculated that the liquid within the Orb is water from the River of Time, but as the River's literal existence cannot be confirmed, this too is considered nothing but folktales and rumor.

The Orb's first known appearance was in 1947 PC, a time in which the Empire of Ergoth had regained some of the glory lost to Silvanesti in the Kinslayer War. The Ergothian Navy was militarily strong as were its cavaliers. Emperor Quevalen X was held in high regard for his great wisdom, which was said even to eclipse that of his wife Idalia, a Zivilynite soothsayer he had taken for his wife in spite of Ergothian custom.

Unfortunately for the empire, Quevalen's mental acumen began to fade when his favored daughter Landea died after being thrown from her horse. He fell into a grave mood and scarcely cared for the politics of his station. When Idalia's ministrations failed to soothe his spirit she brought in Mishakite and Majerean clerics, but they ultimately informed her of what she already knew–her husband's condition was self-imposed.

Fearful of a possible uprising and determined to maintain her family's presence in the royal line, Idalia prayed for guidance in facilitating Quevalen's return to health and in maintaining a wise rule. After four days of meditation and prayer, Idalia received a vision of a mighty oak standing upright in the middle of a vast river. When she regained her senses, she was holding the Orb.

Idalia gave the Orb to her husband in Sirrimont, 1946 PC, the same month that other historical texts note that Quevalen regained his lost spirit (Marcrilius denCaer, 1972-1926 PC). Quevalen consulted the Orb often at first, but as the days passed he made more of his own decisions, and he gave the artifact back to Idalia the following Aelmont. When Quevalen died two months later, neither Idalia nor the Orb could be found.

Ergothian history texts (specifically "Excerpts of Ergoth," 2100-1900 PC) mention the Orb once more before its apparent disappearance. Emperor Emann Quisling learned of the Orb in 1794 PC. Hoping to use its powers of insight against the traitorous Vinas Solamnus, Emperor Quisling dispatched seven cavaliers to seek it out. After months of travel, two of the seven returned victorious. The emperor and his vile allies spent hours trying to discern the Orb's secrets but were unable to produce anything more than vague half-formed answers. Colorathnius (Topical Histories Subdept., Library of Palanthas) claims that his great-grandfather saw a frustrated Quisling throw the Orb at a wall after receiving several dozen responses of "Concentrate and ask again".

A bit of folklore and oral tradition provides the last known piece of information pertaining to the Orb. According to centaurs of the Duntollik region, four Zivilynite oracles using a small black orb in their divinations protected the Grandfather Tree ("Vallenwood and Religion," 182 PC). As the Holy Istaran Empire continued its actions against the "heretical faiths of Balance," the oracles sought an audience with the Kingpriest. Leaving the Tree's care to the centaurs and their shaman Brightwind, the four oracles traveled to the Lordcity of Istar where it is said they presented the Orb to the Kingpriest. The centaurs do not know the oracles' ultimate fate, but it is likely that the oracles were slain or enslaved for their worship of the Tree of Life. If the Kingpriest's experience was anything like that of Emperor Quisling, the Orb may be elsewhere on Krynn or lost beneath the Blood Sea in the Hall of Sacrilege.

The Orb's apparent purpose is to provide the bearer with insight into her immediate future. If the bearer focuses her concentration upon a specific question while shaking the Orb, she will see a cryptic answer float to the surface of the clear disc such that she can read the answer to her question. The answer always appears in the bearer's native language; it is not known what results, if any, occur when an illiterate bearer tries to use the Orb.

Answers revealed by the Orb seem to be based on information known to the bearer at the time of divination–answers such as "ask again later" or "who knows?" are not uncommon. If these accounts are factual, they suggest that the Orb's true purpose may be to improve the bearer's own insight, rather than allow them to continue to rely on outside sources for information.

Pathfinder

Pathfinder resembles a thick arrow, but with carvings along its shaft that represent animals, birds, plants and people. Indeed, it is so heavily carved it is a wonder that the arrow is still in one piece. There is no fletching, and the head is cast from pure gold. The arrow is blunted, indicating that this is obviously not an arrow for war or for hunting.

An elven cleric of Astarin, Branchala's name among the elves, gave Pathfinder as a gift to a wild and wayward relative about to go exploring in the wide and dangerous world of Krynn. It was intended to keep him on the straight and narrow, or at least prevent him from getting too lost, but the foolish elf boy soon ran out of money and sold it to a human merchant for far less than its value. A kender "liberated" Pathfinder from its new owner soon after, and it became an artifact of great renown to that traveling race, who found that it always pointed the way to interesting experiences. It is thought to still be in the possession of one kender or another.

This artifact relates to Branchala's love of trickery and his concern to help those who have lost their way in life – this is not readily apparent to the user, however, who thinks it is merely a navigational tool. When a traveler is unsure of the way to go, he places the arrow at a suitable junction of paths and a swift prayer to Branchala will cause the arrow to point the way. Unfortunately for the traveller, owing to Branchala's sometimes chaotic nature the arrow may not always point the way the traveler wants to go but will always point the way they need to go. It is surprising how often and widely these two directions differ.

Ring of Laughter

This artifact lies at the heart of many cherished fables told by the followers of Branchala, but descriptions of it rarely agree. In one story, a daring treasure hunter might pursue an ornate band of gem-studded precious metal or a delicate loop of priceless, multicolored silks. In another, a humble farmer might find great fortune after donning an unimpressive circle of orange clay or noticing an inexplicable tattoo marking on a single, weathered finger.

Just as the Song of Life would have it, everyone is right and everyone is wrong all at the same time. In a twist known only to the cleverest of Branchala's clergy, the Ring of Laughter is not one but two rings, separated at the forge just before completion. Both rings can change appearance and even location upon the wearer's hands seemingly at random, and they are often an eyesore or oddly conspicuous, especially at humorous moments. The only consistent trait the rings possess is some variation of a harp symbol, but this has often been cleverly concealed from casual observation.

Few stories of the rings acknowledge that there are two, but all teach lessons of humility and kindness. They reiterate the church's insistence that society and its laws (the important ones, anyway) exist to serve people, not the other way around. Abstract rules are hollow and artificial. Humanity, Branchalans say with a smile, is instrumental. Perhaps the most popular tale tells of a lazy and arrogant noble seeking to escape the obligations of political life and a rakish rapscallion who dreams of being wealthy beyond measure. Each comes across the ring and, through hilarious farce, learns that authority is best used for helping others and that social status is rarely the best measure of contentment.

Those who find a single Ring of Laughter claim blessings of safety and good fortune. In times of trouble, the ring wearer is often saved by odd noises such as a rustling in nearby foliage that provides just enough distraction for escape. A Ring of Laughter will also grant its wearer one of their dearest wishes, although requests motivated purely by greed or dark purposes typically go awry–usually in a way which exposes a weakness or teaches the bearer a lesson.

Mischief and mayhem often ensue when two people each wear one of the paired rings at the same time. As soon as this occurs, the mind and spirit of each wearer immediately switches with that of the other regardless of location. Rings cannot be removed nor bodies regained until each wearer learns an important lesson, as determined by Branchala himself. Among the eldest of the Songmaster's clergy it is rumored that if one individual dons both Rings of Laughter, he or she will laugh out loud as the Bard King grants a simple yet profound answer to one of the Universe's greatest questions.

The Staff of Argon

The Staff of Argon is an ancient artifact of Sargonnas, dating back to the early years of the Third Dragon War in the Age of Dreams. The staff is six feet tall and made from the wood of a black locust tree. Black-and-red leather wraps the top half of the staff. The most noticeable feature of the staff is the golden condor at the top, with a golden circlet behind it. The condor figure faces to the right and has ruby eyes. Only a true follower of Sargonnas, typically a cleric or monk, may touch this staff. Those who do not hold the wrath of Sargonnas in their heart staff will find thorns jutting out from the black locust wood, impaling the hand that holds it.

Little is known of the staff's origins, though some historians date it back to the Third Dragon War and possibly earlier. It was created by a group of Ergothian monks who had fallen away from the path of Majere. Bitter and vengeful, the monks turned to the worship of Sargonnas and founded the Brotherhood of Argon. These monks combined the teachings of Majere with the harsh ways of Sargonnas to create a new path of brutal discipline.

The Brotherhood of Argon sought to destroy the monastery of Majere that they once called home. After fasting and praying to Sargonnas, the god gave them a vision of the Staff of Argon. For days, the monks worked feverishly in creating the staff. When the golden condor was mounted atop the staff, it is said that Sargonnas himself blessed the weapon.

The attack on the Ergothian monastery was swift and decisive. The monks proved to be formidable foes. Though they didn't have the numbers to destroy the monks of Majere, the Staff of Argon was the deciding factor. Molten lava erupted from the earth, swallowing the monastery of Majere in volcanic fury. When one of Majere's faithful tried to seize the staff from the hand of the Argonian monk, thorns punctured his hand, causing it to be crippled for the remainder of his life.

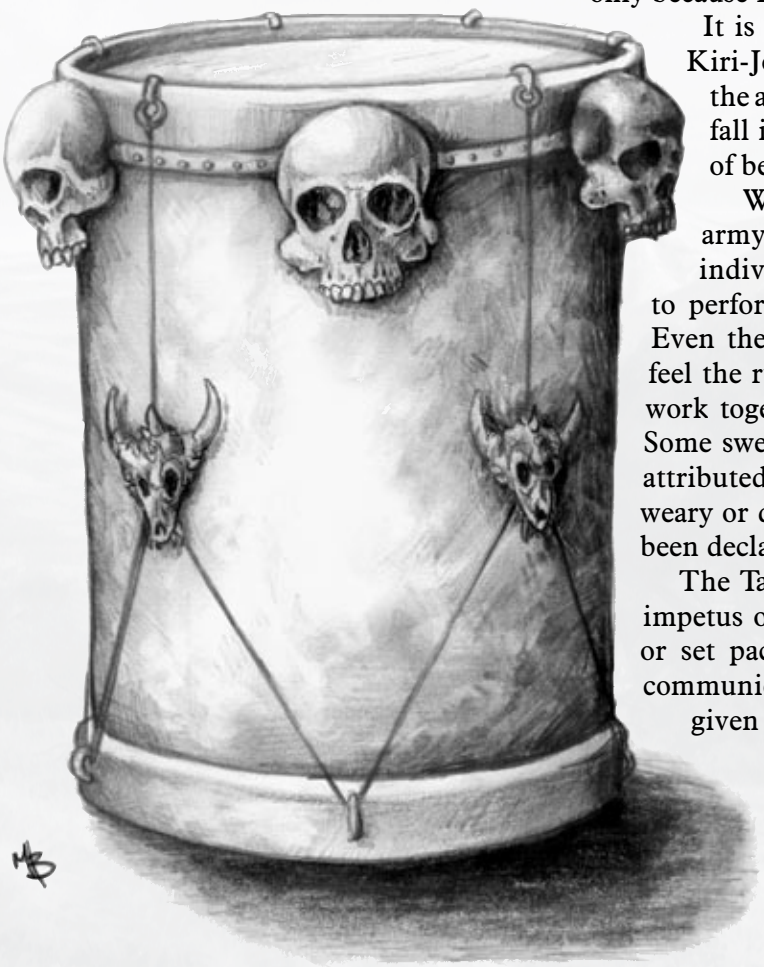
What happened next to the staff is largely unknown, though the Brotherhood of Argon was defeated in the Third Dragon War. It would not be seen again for many centuries until agents of the Kingpriest discovered it in a tomb in the Khalkist Mountains. When the agents tried to grasp the staff, thorns punctured their hands. Branding it an artifact of evil, the staff was cautiously taken by cart towards the Holy City. It would have surely been locked away in the Hall of Sacrilege in the Tower of Istar had it arrived in Istar. The cart and its caretakers never made it.

With the return of the gods in the War of the Lance, clerics of Sargonnas have uncovered ancient prophecies surrounding the Staff of Argon. According to various clues in the Tome of Tirinus, the power of the Bloody Condor will be felt upon Ansalon again, and the Brotherhood will make its return.

Taivul

The Taivul is a kind of war-drum, made of bison hide stretched across a sturdy wooden frame, around two feet long and a foot wide. The sides of the drum are painted with the colors and symbols of the current army or lord it belongs to. A sturdy, thick, bison-leather strap attached allows it to be slung around its bearer and easily carried and beaten on the move.

The Taivul is a legendary item known to armies on the sides of both Light and Darkness–although the good-aligned speak of it with awe and reverence, whereas the wicked whisper in fear and despair. The Taivul has been a part of several armies in its long history, passed from armory to armory as needed or as the god dictated. Humans say Reorx made the Taivul as part of his duties as Kiri-Jolith's squire, and that he would beat it while his Lord was in battle. Dwarves scowl at this–when in their possession, the campfire tales relate that although Reorx did indeed make the Taivul (who else could have carved such a perfect frame, such a well-made instrument?) it was only because Kijo the Blade begged him to.



It is always borne into battle and beaten by a warrior-priest of Kiri-Jolith. The Taivul is a clear sign to all that Kiri-Jolith favors the army it is being used by; however, should the Taivul somehow fall into the wrong hands, it falls weirdly silent and no amount of beating will produce a sound from the skin.

When beaten in the heat of battle, it emboldens those in the army it belongs to, rallying troops and raising morale. It inspires individuals to acts of heroism, and whole regiments are motivated to perform well beyond what they thought they were capable of. Even the most untrained army of farmers and craftsmen begin to feel the rush of battle in their blood at the sound of the Taivul and work together to fight as if they were an almost professional force. Some swear it also increases strength and stamina, but that may be attributed to the fresh courage it inspires in those previously too weary or dispirited to continue the fight. Many a hopeless battle has been declared a victory thanks to the presence of the Taivul.

The Taivul is best used to rally a fatigued army, or maximize the impetus of an attack, but may also be used to give mundane orders or set pace. When used in this manner, those orders seem to be communicated farther, more clearly and carried out faster than those given on a normal drum.

Magic & Mysteries

Three moons in the night sky.
Three gods of magic.

The dedicated wizards of the Orders of High Sorcery keep watch to make certain their arts are being used responsibly. They seek artifacts of magic—from objects as simple as ever-sharp blades to devices that allow a person to travel through time—which could be found in abandoned tower or forgotten tomb.

In this section are pages from a spellbook written by my twin, Raistlin Majere, in his youth. Learn of the sword carried by my fallen friend, Sir Sturm Brightblade. Study the ways of the Renegade Hunters, who enforce the laws of magic on those who practice powerful spells without first taking the Test. Discover the artifacts of a lost Tower of High Sorcery, and examine the shards of a shattered Dragon Orb.

Magic is fascinating, alluring. But there is a heavy price for its power. Follow its mysteries only if you can keep them from consuming you.

Caramon Majere
Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

The Brightblade

This document was found among the belongings of Sir Sturm Brightblade, Knight of the Crown and Hero of the Lance. According to Sir Brightblade's companions, the document was unearthed by the Solamnic in the great Library of Khrystann in Tarsis prior to a major assault on the city by the Red Dragonarmy. It is written by renowned scholar and servant of Kiri-Jolith Sumitpo diFurian and is presented here in its entirety.

Reilmar Gislora Kantis,
Master Librarian of the Library of Khrystann

As requested by my esteemed colleagues in the Lordcity of Tarsis, I have put together this report on my findings regarding the legendary sword known as Brightblade. First, however, I must give thanks to Lord Trysten Brightblade who was kind enough to allow me access to the sword as well as several drawings detailing the sword and the process involved in creating it. I am most grateful for his kindness. Indeed, I could not have written this document without the support of the entire Brightblade family.

A Description of the Brightblade

I shall begin by giving you a description of the sword itself. The Brightblade is approximately 2,000 years old. Romgar Firesteel, a dwarven weaponsmith, crafted it for Berthel Brightblade as a reward for having saved the dwarf's life. As was the trend among the Knights of Solamnia at the time, it is a hand-and-a-half sword. This means that, while the blade itself for all intents and purposes is that of a longsword, the grip is longer, allowing for more leverage when using the sword in combat, simply because the wielder can put more strength behind any swing or thrust made with the sword.

The hilt of the sword is of exquisite design. Both grip and crossguard are plated with pure gold mined from the famous Garnet mines. Indeed, all of the materials used in the creation of the Brightblade were imported from the famous mines in Garnet. Edged into the golden grip is an intricate pattern, the style of which was very popular among the Solamnic nobility at the time, inspired by the Tiiashara Luerrath patterns used in elven architecture. The pommel is made of Garnet silver with the family heraldry edged in gold.

Like the hilt, the Brightblade's blade is clearly of dwarven craftsmanship. Indeed, I have never seen a blade quite as beautiful. The blade itself is constructed of the finest steel mined from Master Firesteel's own mine. It is 49 inches long and double-edged. Dwarven runes of protection, honor, and friendship have been engraved into the silvery blade. Just above the crossguard is a beautiful ruby which was a gift from the Firesteel clan. The ruby is held by two twirling strips of gold. On the left side of the gem a small symbol of the Kingfisher is engraved into the blade and on the right side is a rose. The Brightblade features a fuller which was quite unusual for swords at the time. In fact, the drawings provided by the Brightblade family indicate that the Brightblade was an experiment, one of the very first blades designed with a fuller.

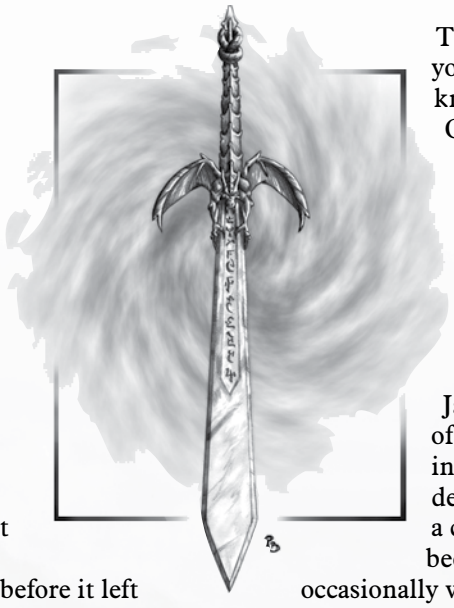
As you can imagine, the Brightblade has seen its share of action and it has spilled a lot of blood during its 2,000 years on the battlefield. However, despite having been wielded in dozens, if not hundreds of battles throughout the centuries, the blade is flawless, unmarred by scratch, dent, or rust. This is a unique quality, as no ordinary sword could hope to last two millennia. Lord Brightblade claims that, unlike his peers, he has never had to spend time maintaining his sword, other than wiping the occasional blood off the blade.

During a training session in the training hall of Castle Brightblade I was given the opportunity to wield the Brightblade for a few maneuvers. I do not think I have ever wielded a sword quite as well balanced as this sword and, combined with the sword's light weight, it presents its wielder with a clear advantage in battle. The edges of the blade are exceptionally keen. To put it into perspective, I managed to penetrate the armor of a plate-armored training dummy with a single swing.

The Powers of the Brightblade

As I mentioned earlier, the Brightblade's edge is extremely keen, cutting through anything lighter than plate armor as effortlessly as a knife cuts through warm butter. During my 25 years studying Solamnic weaponry I have never come across a blade as sharp as this one, and I am quite certain that the blade has been enhanced in a way that no ordinary weaponsmith could. Whether magical oils were applied to the blade during production or a specific hammering technique was used, I cannot say for certain but those two processes are the most likely to have given the blade its sharp edges, in my opinion.

The Brightblade is a legendary weapon among Solamnics in general and the Knights of Solamnia in particular. Solamnic folklore says that the Brightblade cannot break as long as its wielder is pure of heart and follows the tenets of Vinas Solamnus – honor, justice, and compassion. However, if its wielder sways from the path of Good, the sword will shatter, cursing its wielder. This dedication to the founding principles of the Knights of Solamnia seems to imply a form of sentience and I find that hard to believe.



The Brightblade family claims that Gritmar Steelbrand, a powerful cleric of Reorx at the time, blessed the gold before it left the mines, and historic records from the Forgehall in Garnet Thax confirm these claims. These blessings may be a contributing factor when it comes to the supposedly magical nature of the Brightblade but that is but one of many theories regarding the sword's extraordinary qualities. Another interesting theory that I personally find more likely is that Romgar Firesteel had a vision in which Paladine and Kiri-Jolith showed him how to forge the Brightblade.

During my time at Castle Brightblade I was allowed to study the sword in private, and through prayer I learned that the sword is indeed blessed. A divine energy was present in the sword and I felt the presence of my deity manifest within it. My experience is a clear indication that, while Master Forger Gritmar Steelbrand may indeed have blessed the materials used, Kiri-Jolith is the true source of the Brightblade's true powers, whatever they may be.

The History of the Brightblade

On the last day of my stay in Castle Brightblade I was able to have a talk with Lord Brightblade about the family heirloom. During that conversation it became clear to me that, while the sword itself is a source of great pride for the Brightblade family, the sword's history is even more significant. Not only is it an account of the family's proud lineage but it is also a wonderful example of the ideals on which the Knighthood of Solamnia was founded all those centuries ago. Now, although Lord Brightblade related the following account of the Brightblade's origin to me that evening, I have also read Berthel Brightblade's own journals and they tell the same story as I was given by Lord Brightblade.

The tale of the Brightblade begins with a young Solamnic named Berthel. Unlike most knights at the time, this young Squire of the Crown was not of noble birth but the son a simple farmer. He was traveling north from his home in Heartlund to the fortress of Vingaard Keep to be crowned a Knight of the Crown, having been deemed worthy as a knight by his sponsor, an old Knight of the Sword named Sir Di Kanto. The journey was a long but largely uneventful one and the young squire soon reached Jansburg, a small village located just south of a river delta dividing the Vingaard River in two. Berthel was making good time and he decided to rest for the night in the local inn, a cozy place called the Red Goblin, named so because of the red-painted goblins that would occasionally venture out of the nearby forest to raid the farms of Jansburg.

It was here that the young Berthel Brightblade first met a dwarven weaponsmith named Romgar Firesteel. Romgar, whom Lord Brightblade described as being the paragon of all dwarves with a stout build, a striking beard, a fondness for ale, and a talent for telling stories, was on his way home after a successful business trip to Vingaard Keep. The two shared a meal and more than one mug of ale that evening and talked long into the night, sharing tales of battle and honor. The smile that crept across Lord Brightblade's lips as he described the dwarf belies a great fondness for the Firesteel clan and I have a feeling that a bond much stronger than mere friendship connects the two families; it is a bond of family.

But I digress. As the sun rose on the next day, Berthel Brightblade made ready to travel the last 35 miles to Vingaard Keep. He polished his sword and put on his leather armor, ate a hearty breakfast, prayed to Kiri-Jolith, and fed his horse. It was then that he heard the screams. Rushing out the Red Goblin's stables, the young knight-to-be drew his sword, ready for whatever was to come. Villagers ran through the main street, panicked. Behind the fleeing villagers, Berthel could make out the shapes of goblins riding their wolf mounts, their faces painted in a bright red color. Instinctively, he untied his own horse, mounted it and charged toward the goblins. Unprepared for any kind of resistance, the goblins did not notice the charging squire until it was too late. Berthel swung his sword, opening one goblin's throat.

Undeterred by the unexpected resistance, the goblins dismounted their mounts and ran through the village, looking for easy prey. More screams were heard as the goblin raiders entered buildings and dragged villagers out into the street. Horrified by what he saw, Berthel sprang into action once more, charging through Jansburg's

main street. What happened next is unclear but Berthel Brightblade's own journal described his charge as "blood and chaos." What is clear is that the young squire suddenly found himself staring at a massive goblin with dark-red skin and a wicked spear in its hands. What Berthel described as a "massive goblin" is most likely a hobgoblin, a larger, stronger, and smarter cousin to the goblin. In front of this large creature lay a heavily wounded Romgar Firesteel, blood pouring from his shoulder and his belly. The creature raised its spear but before it could finish off the wounded dwarf, Berthel challenged it, hoping to attract its attention. He succeeded.

The hobgoblin turned around to face its challenger, a nasty smile revealing brown needle-sharp teeth. Berthel raised his sword in a knight's salute and then went into a fighting position. Bellowing a war cry, the hobgoblin charged at the young squire, its spear aimed straight at Berthel's heart. However, Berthel was well trained and deflected the hobgoblin's spear with his sword. It was a fierce battle; the hobgoblin's brute strength proving to be more than a match for the young knight-to-be. Berthel felt his sword getting heavier, his movements slower, all the while the hobgoblin continued thrusting its spear at him. Finally the monster scored a hit. Feinting a high thrust, it suddenly changed direction, penetrating the young knight's thigh. Severely wounded and with a large spear sending wave after wave of excruciating pain through his body, Berthel fell to his knees. Laughing, the hobgoblin turned its head and shouted something in a guttural tongue to the goblins still left in the village, then snapped its head back, looking in surprise at the sword that protruded from its chest. The monster died.

Leaderless, the remaining goblins fled the village. Berthel Brightblade crawled to the wounded dwarf and, finding signs of life, started healing the dwarf's wounds. However, he never finished dressing the dwarf's wounds, his own injuries too severe. The knight-to-be fainted. Three days later Berthel woke up in a bed in one of the rooms of the Red Goblin, his wounds partly healed.

The knight and the dwarf weaponsmith traveled to Vingaard Keep together. Once there, the dwarf gave a statement, telling the knights there about Berthel's heroic and selfless actions. Impressed by the account, which was later confirmed by Jansburg locals, the commander of Vingaard Keep, High Justice Myceal, agreed to knight Berthel. The ceremony was to take place two months after Berthel's and Romgar's arrival at Vingaard Keep.

Romgar did not waste any time. He dispatched messengers to Garnet with orders to bring back gold, silver, steel, and a red gem from the Firesteel treasury. The materials arrived one week later and the dwarven weaponsmith immediately started working on his gift to the man who had saved his life in Jansburg and who selflessly had defended the common man. The dwarf worked for two weeks, never leaving his forge. When he finally emerged from the smithy, he held in his hands a sword of the finest steel, a true masterpiece. He held the Brightblade.

The rest is history. Berthel was knighted and a lifelong dream had come true. He was now a Knight of the Crown. The Brightblade was given to him immediately after the knighting ceremony and, beholding the brilliance of the blade, they hailed the newly knighted Knight of the Crown Berthel Brightblade.

In Conclusion

There is no doubt in my mind that the Brightblade is a unique weapon and that it has been blessed by a higher power, be it Paladine, Kiri-Jolith, or even Reorx as some legends suggest. However, the true blessing of the Brightblade is its history. The story of Berthel Brightblade and his magic sword has inspired hundreds, if not thousands, of young men to strive to become champions of freedom and justice. That is the real magic.

Sumitpo diFurian
Warrior-Scholar of Kiri-Jolith

Mantis Rose

To the Prophet of Majere Kalen Weepingrock of the Garden of the Wasted Sands
From Brother Zacharias of the Darkwoods Monastery

Our faith teaches obedience to those properly set above us. Yet, we are also taught to seek the keys to holiness in the order of Creation around us. After two weeks of meditation, I deemed it holy and right that I write to you directly on this matter, Prophet. Although High Abbott Thomas disagrees with me about the significance of this matter, I believe you will understand the gravity of my writings. Know that I do not seek glory for the one of which I will speak, but only to spread a message of hope.

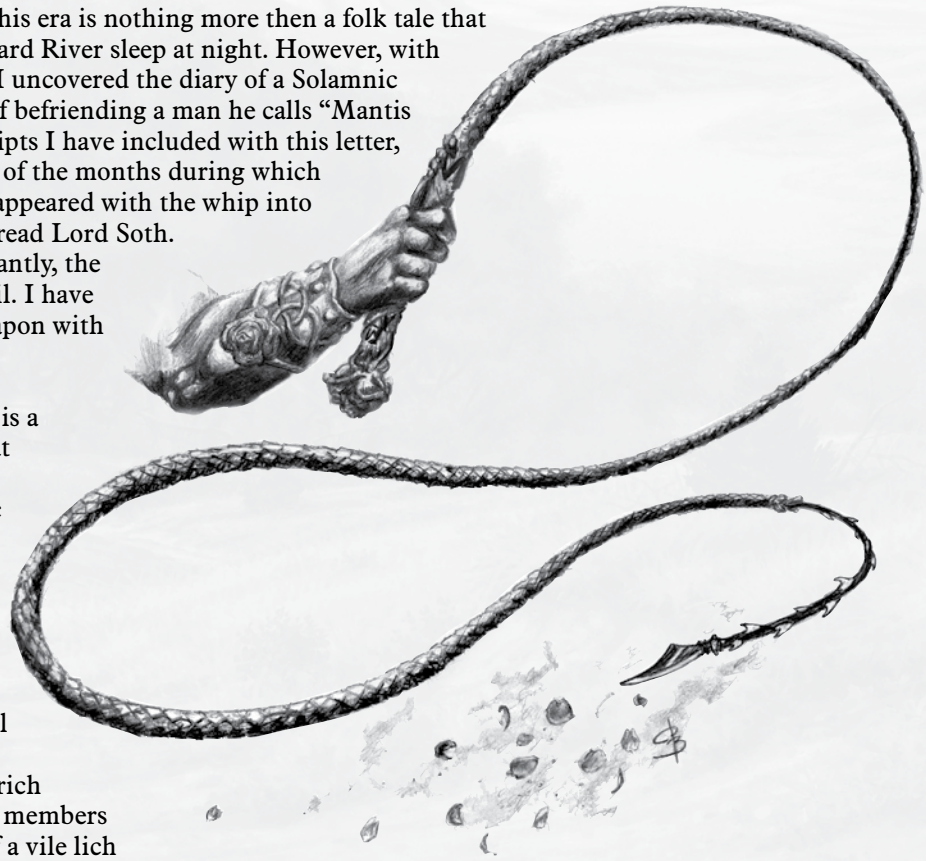
Amongst the names penned into the bi-annual census list already sent to you by the High Abbot, you may notice an oddity in the column headed "New Recruits to the Faith:" Adalgisa Copperthorne, apparently a woman's name. It is true that our monastery has given temporary shelter to a woman. However, I believe this woman is special. I believe her to be the Mantis Rose.

It is an obscure legend of the church, I know. However, as chief instructor of the Darkwoods Monastery's Hall of Prowess, it is my responsibility to be intimately familiar with all our tales of honorable combat – even those believed to be merely children's bedtime stories. I have read the oldest illuminated manuscripts of our church, even those kept by the Aesthetics of the Library of Palanthas that pre-date the Cataclysm. In them I have found repeated references to lone warrior champions of Majere (known as Manthus to the Ergothians) who, with a combination of fists and exotic ranged weapons such as whips and spiked chains, battled the undead throughout our history. I believe these are the earliest mention of the legendary Mantis Rose.

Many of our brethren have also heard the legends of the Mantis Barb, a holy whip with the power to strip the flesh from a ghoul in one strike and send an unwilling specter into the River of Souls. There are stories of a strange warrior who appeared in the days after the fiery rock struck Istar wielding just such a weapon. He is said to have battled the undead spilling over from the cursed realm of Knightlund into Gaardlund and Hinterland.

Many people think that the Mantis Rose of this era is nothing more then a folk tale that was told to help children living along the Vingaard River sleep at night. However, with the help of the Aesthetics in the Great Library, I uncovered the diary of a Solamnic rancher from this period in history who wrote of befriending a man he calls "Mantis Rose." As you will see from the copied manuscripts I have included with this letter, the rancher's account creates a historical record of the months during which this Mantis Rose lived and fought before he disappeared with the whip into Nightlund in a failed attempt to vanquish the dread Lord Soth.

Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, the rancher describes the Mantis Barb in great detail. I have included his drawing and description of the weapon with the copies of his diary pages.



The tragic tale of Lord Kolganthus Seinrich is a well-known tale in the taverns of Gaardlund that many would not tie to the legend of the Mantis Rose. Armed with a magical whip, the Solamnic nobleman supposedly attempted to liberate his family's lost holdings in Nightlund from a group of vampires who had usurped them. Although Seinrich was killed, the weapon he wielded is said to have made its way to a now-lost monastery in the Southern Dargaard Mountains. A century later, history would reveal this weapon as the legendary Mantis Barb.

Approximately one hundred years after Seinrich died, the Dargaard Monastery was destroyed by members of a Chemoshite cult centered on the worship of a vile lich

necromancer named Nolyx. Previously unknown personal writings discovered along with the diary of the rancher confirm the tall tales that a single warrior-monk, well learned in the art of the merciful strike, survived the destruction of his cloister. Armed with a weapon whose description matches that of the Barb, this second Mantis Rose methodically hunted down and destroyed every member of the cult, including Nolyx, over the next decade.

The folklore of Gaardlund and Lemish tell of this monk continuing to battle evil in the lands north of the New Sea for many years after the lich was defeated. The abrupt end of the warrior's journal leads me to believe he was killed approximately fifteen years after the obliteration of the Dargaard monastery. With his apparent death, the Mantis Barb disappeared again; it reappeared three months ago in the hands of Adalgisa Copperthorne at the Darkwoods Monastery

I am most familiar with the history of the Mantis Barb. I have studied the relevant manuscripts and committed to memory the oldest etchings and long-lost drawings of the whip. I am certain the weapon that Adalgisa has with her is the long-lost whip-dagger of Majere's warrior champions. High Abbott Thomas disagrees with me, and says that I should be more prudent in my declarations before I inadvertently spread a message of false hope throughout the monastery. The abbot says the gods took their most powerful artifacts with them that when they left.

I do not believe this. Not only do I believe this to be the whip, but I believe that with rumors of war brewing with Solamnia that its reappearance is something good that those of our faith can draw hope and meaning from. Although there is talk of sending the widowed Adalgisa to an abbey, I am requesting your permission for her to stay at the Darkwoods Monastery so that I may instruct in the proper use of the whip and the sacred art of the merciful strike. She has already learned many of our meditation techniques and has developed a comprehensive understanding of our faith's tenets in the short month she has lived with us, recuperating from the injuries she had when she arrived.

I believe with the proper instruction Adalgisa Copperthorne can be a force for good and a source of inspiration in the coming months. I believe she is the next Mantis Rose, and that she will be needed should conflict come to fruition.

As always, seek the wisdom to make your decision in Majere's eternal serenity. Ultimately, I believe you will make the right choice, Prophet.

Brother Zacharias

Below is an excerpt copied from the rancher's diary describing the Mantis Barb:

"As my new friend slept as only the tired and wounded can, I couldn't help but examine the weapon he carried. I don't know why I picked it up considering what I'd seen him do to those shambling corpses in the cow pen with it just now. Maybe it's because I could tell this mystery man and his weapon were something special, that this was my one big brush with greatness. I don't know. I do know that I'd never seen anything like this weapon before. Really the only whips I'd ever seen are used for driving cattle. The whip of this 'Mantis Rose' is a work of art.

It was definitely heavier then any bull whip I've ever handled, but it was well-balanced–crafted from the finest materials. The whip's leather tail was studded with sharp metal blades that ran along the length of the lash to the end of its dagger-like tip. I can't rightly figure what the handle is carved from–it looks a lot like an old bone that's been sitting in the weather for a while, rough and polished at the same time–but there are these really fancy relief patterns of roses and bugs that look like they're praying trimmed in copper carved into it.

It felt different too, warm in my hand, but not uncomfortable like. It felt good, like maybe if I was a warrior I could slash apart the walking dead with a few well-placed cracks of it. I'm not saying that Mantis couldn't fight; he fought tooth and nail with his hands and feet. Strangest damn thing I've ever seen. But I could tell that there was something powerful and good in that whip, and I'm just a starving cattle rancher."

Shards of a Dragon Orb

To the Esteemed Par-Salian, Head of the Orders of High Sorcery,

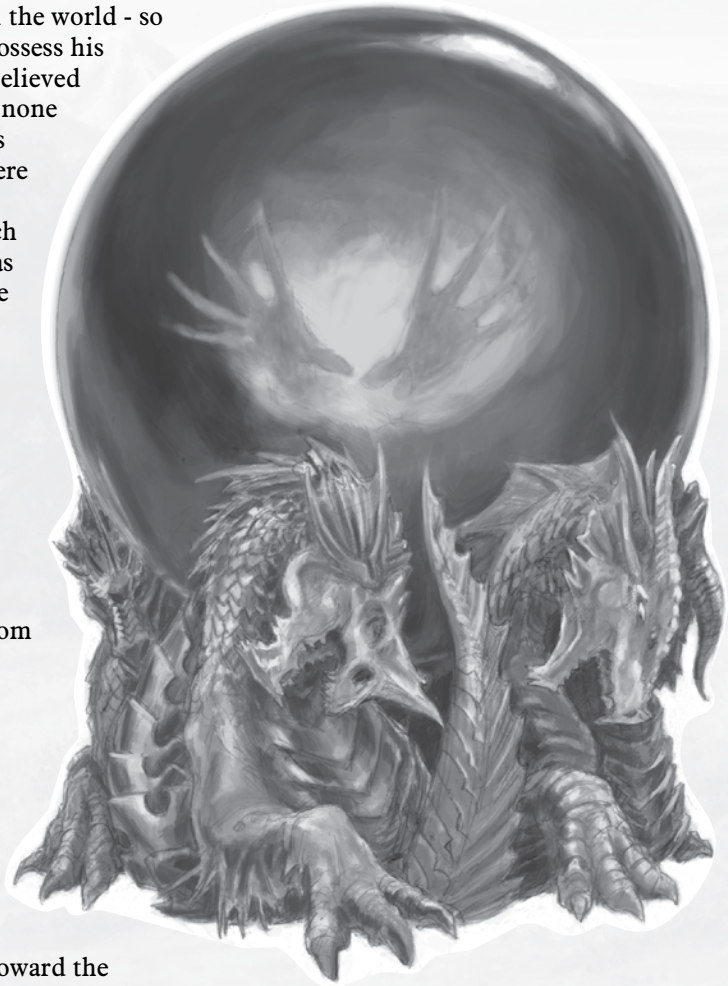
I am Carsus, an elder Aesthetic of the Library of Palanthas. I will not bore you with a tale of my life; suffice it to say, my life's work for the Library has been the history and cataloguing of magic and magical artifacts. Recently, I was compiling various texts on the Dragon Orbs and came across something that I am surprised was not discovered sooner. I believe you will find it of great interest.

The origin and history of the Dragon Orbs is fairly well known to those in our fields, but to summarize: created during the Third Dragon War, the five Orbs, each with a colored mist representing a chromatic dragon, are powerful relics wrought to help defeat Takhisis and bring balance back to Krynn. Most of what we know is that they have a great effect upon chromatic dragons, but their full capabilities are still not known. What is known about their composition is that they are made of a delicate crystal that is susceptible to damage by physical means, but not magical. The crystal is of an unknown composition that is not found in nature; certainly, the crystal is one of the many marks of the gods of magic that can be found in the Dragon Orbs. There is also the nature of the mist inside each Orb, which I confess our texts mention little about.

Of the Orbs, Tasslehoff Burrfoot destroyed one at the Whitestone Council. Another was used by Laurana at the Battle of the High Clerist Tower and is now presumed destroyed, buried beneath the Tower's ruins. The third, rumors have hinted, ruined the mind of Lorac Caladon. Its current whereabouts are unknown, but even here in Palanthas we have heard that it is the possession of Raistlin Majere. Most importantly, the two final Orbs went missing and were likely destroyed during the Lost Battles in the years before the Cataclysm.

As you well know, there are a great number of magical items in the world - so many that it is a wonder that every man, elf, and dwarf does not possess his own - many of which have unexplained origins. It has long been believed that the only magic of the Orb is the mist that swirls within, with none in the crystal that makes up the Orb itself. Yet, a handful of stories from our texts may provide clues otherwise, clues that indicate there is more to the Orbs than previously thought. These stories all revolve around simple objects such as pendants and amulets, which are often designed with small gems, jewels, and pieces of crystals as the centerpiece of the jewelry. As you may have surmised, I believe that the objects described in our texts contain pieces of those two missing Dragon Orbs, whether the jeweler knew of the origin of the crystal or not. The shards themselves are likely a variety of sizes and many have probably been shaped for specific jewelry.

Sorting the stories that fit the description of potential Dragon Orb jewelry has been difficult, but not impossible. With our catalogues dating back to the time of Istar, I have chosen three diverse entries from the catalogues to share with you:



Ceremonial Dagger: A more recent discovery was this dagger that had several small crystal fragments in the hilt. A merchant from Tarsis came to possess the dagger by way of a poker wager. When a Kapak draconian accosted him on the road he thrust the dagger into the draconian's throat, killing it. He expected the dagger to be lost when the Kapak turned to acid, yet the dagger remained undamaged.

Wooden Amulet of Kagonesti fashion: This amulet had a large piece of crystal inserted into the wood. The elf that wore it reported that the amulet allowed him to remain hidden from sight in a tree in the fog from a small black dragon that his clan was driving away from his village. When the dragon turned toward the

others of his clan, the elf claimed to have jumped down on the dragon's back and struck it down with a single blow of his sword.

Gold ring inset with two crystals and a diamond: This ring was owned by a wealthy Istarian noblewoman who received it at her wedding only a couple of years before the Cataclysm. A scribe traveling in the area reported that she was beset by visions of a town being destroyed by a wing of black dragons. Some months later, she stumbled into a village, miles from her home, injured and near starving. Days later, news arrived by the same scribe that her town had been destroyed by a dragon attack.

Perhaps the most intriguing and detailed account came from a two hundred year old journal of Rose Knight Devon Trevaar of Palanthas regarding his sub-commander, Sir Edmund DiMaelin. DiMaelin showed no ability for leadership or even many of the qualities that a Knight should have. Yet, after inheriting a set of crystal-studded gauntlets, more than a dozen crystals of varying size in each, DiMaelin seemed to be reborn: headstrong and confident, and more knowledgeable in battlefield tactics than he had ever been before, particularly those involving dragons. While distrustful of the gauntlets, as Solamnic Knights frequently are of magic, their use could not be denied.

Several years later, DiMaelin would come into possession of yet another artifact with crystal shards embedded in it: a pendant, scavenged from a battlefield. Trevaar quickly noticed that the shards appeared to be of the same kind as those on the gauntlets, and describes DiMaelin as if the pendant were further augmenting the younger knight's mind. We do not know what happened to DiMaelin and the artifacts, as the journal was damaged before we received it and transcribed it, but the events described within are compelling.

Other entries in our catalogues describe objects causing visions of dragons, of battles no living being has seen, even the creation of the Dragon Orbs. Some even claim that the gods of magic themselves spoke to them through the jewelry containing the crystals. But there are more that indicate the shards are indeed magical, especially when it comes to dragons and their kin. The reports came from across Ansalon, from before the Cataclysm to within the last fifty years. Are these truly crystals from a Dragon Orb? Can your Orders say for certain whether those two Orbs survived the Lost Battles?

From what I have been able to gather, your Orders have shown little interest in the remains of the Orb that was destroyed on Sancrist, or that the gnomes quickly misplaced those remains. Certainly, an attempt should be made by the Orders to recover the Orb shards! The reasons are twofold: First, while there is likely no purpose in trying to reconstruct a Dragon Orb, I should think your wizards would relish the chance to study the shards of the known destroyed Orb to determine once and for all whether they truly retain any qualities of the Orb from which they came. Secondly, finding some of this purported 'Dragon Orb jewelry' could lead to the fate of the missing Dragon Orbs or whether these crystal shards came from a Dragon Orb at all. Finally, it is not inconceivable that someone may attempt to gather the shards from Mt. Nevermind to gain incredible power from them. Without knowing the true power and potential of the Dragon Orbs, it is impossible to predict the results should they succeed!

Respectfully,
Carsus of Palanthas

Renegade Hunters After the War of the Lance

"The air around Evegelis burned at his lungs with each breath that he took. The heat and fire that had suddenly almost engulfed him had exploded with enough force to put fine cracks in the obsidian floor.

Were it not for his training, the unexpected fireball spell would have meant death to the apprentice hunter. As it was, he had had barely enough time to speak the words of a spell to counter the fireball's effects before it had fully engulfed him. 'Most wizards know that some spells can be used to counter the effects of certain other spells.'

The gravely voice of his master, Scareth Moonsheath, sprang unbidden into his mind:, 'But many don't understand magic fully; they don't pay attention to the subtle nuisances that are there and can be used by those who know how to coax it out.'

It had been a hard lesson to learn for Evegelis. He had spent months sitting within the library of the Tower at Wayreth, locked in study on the principles of magic. He had to unlock many obscure texts and theories, learn the secrets of how to counter the magic of an enemy and not just the spell.

'All mages use the magic granted to the world by the Gods of Magic, and lock it within their mind,' Scareth had said, 'trapped in the form of words and gestures, or requiring both as well as powerful totems or materials to release that trapped potential.'

'But the art of a renegade hunter is to look beyond the ordinary trappings of magic that are taught to apprentices in mage school,' the voice of his master drummed against the inside of Evegelis's head, booming in his ears over the crackling of the fires that licked around him.

'To a practiced hunter,' the hard voice continued, 'trained in the techniques of spell combat, you can use almost any spell prepared to counter an enemy's spells.'"

Excerpt from Evegelis Silverblade's training to become a renegade hunter.

There are many paths to power, and they can be very seductive. It is all too easy for aspiring mages or sages steeped in arcane lore and a thirst for power to overreach and attempt to grab greater and greater power. Not all those who wield magic have the skill or the courage to wield it properly; with thought and understanding of what they are doing, ensuring that they control the power contained within their dusty tomes and not letting the power control them.

Realizing the need to ensure that all those who would use the power of the Art would wield it competently, all aspiring mages must undergo the most hazardous and grueling of Tests, to prove that they are worthy of learning the more advanced arcane spells and rituals.

But even this measure may not be enough. Many wizards throughout Krynn's history have taken the Test and gone on to threaten the world around them. They have defied the will of the Conclave, the ruling body that oversees all wizards on Krynn, or sought to threaten the magic itself.

The task of policing these wielders of the arcane arts falls upon a small group of mages, drawn from each of the three Orders of High Sorcery. Such mages, called the renegade hunters, are the most secretive and disturbingly quiet of all wizards.

Every wizard that walks the world today does so under a cloud of misunderstanding and fear, inspired by the machinations of the long lost Kingpriest in ancient and doomed Istar, and perpetuated in the dark days that followed the Cataclysm.

Although all wizards walk in this shadow, the renegade hunters walk within greater shadows. They are reviled and feared by even their fellow brethren. None look fondly upon a visit from a renegade hunter; none willingly associate with them, fearing the day that one might knock on their door.

Renegade hunters hear the callings of the Moon Gods within their hearts, calling them to the service of all magic, not just to their particular Order. Their calling is to walk the world, watching those that wield arcane power. They watch and report what they see to the Conclave, and if necessary, they take action against those who abuse the power granted by the Art.

Joining the renegade hunters is not easy. The applicant must be both a wizard in good standing and must have survived his Test. During the apprentice hunter's Test, the apprentice often receives some sign or portent from his chosen patron, urging him to undertake the arduous training to become a defender of magic.

Renegade hunters are some of the unlikeliest wizards to study within the libraries of High Sorcery or walk the hidden corridors of the Tower of Wayreth. They have seen much of the world outside their studies and laboratories, walked in far places and talked to many people from far-flung corners.

Renegade hunters often dress themselves in much the same ways that other members of the Orders would, wearing proudly the robes of their particular Order. As ever, it is the differences that are important. The renegade hunter carries more weapons than just his spells and enchantments. Many carry the curved blades of the assassin.

The symbol and mark of the Hunter is their assassin's sickle. The Hunters specifically selected the curved blade as their symbol as its crescent shape acts as a constant reminder of the pledges they have taken to the Moon Gods to protect magic.

When a Master Hunter has deemed his apprentice worthy and skilled enough, he is presented before the Grandmaster Hunter for his Order and the Head of his Order to take his final vows, seeking a sign of approval from his patron deity. At the culmination of these sacred vows to the Hunter's patron deity, he is awarded his sickle.

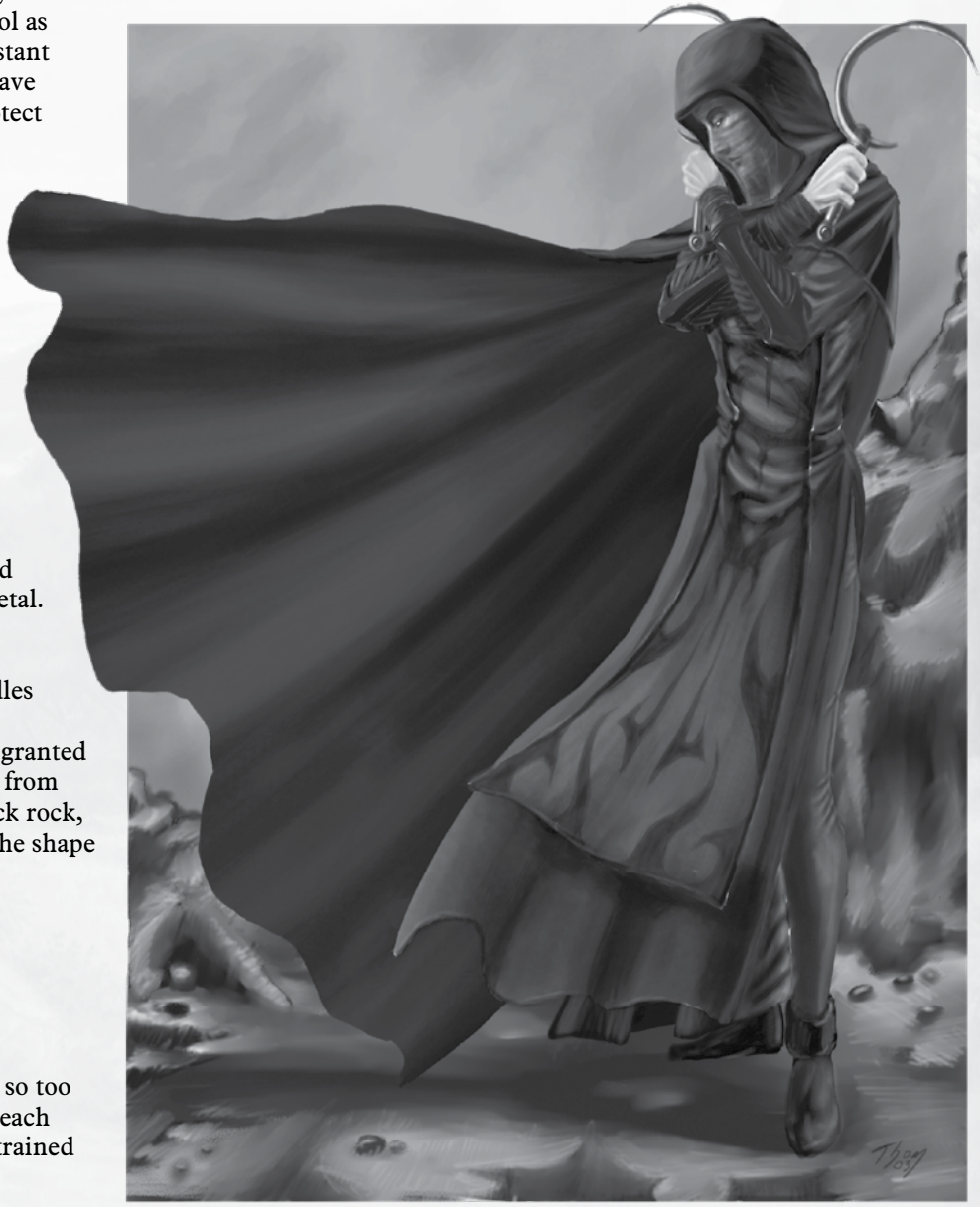
Sickles given to the White Hunters are made from purified silver or, rarely, from dragonmetal. Those sickles that are granted to the Red Hunters are made with a steel blade and the handles decorated with small rubies or ground ruby-dust. The sickles granted to the Black Hunters are made from cold iron, or more rarely, a black rock, such as obsidian, shaped into the shape of a sickle by magic.

Renegade Hunters of Each Order

Just as no two mages are exact, so too are the renegade hunters from each of the Orders. Each, although trained with the skills needed to bring in almost any mage, they tend to be in agreement with the philosophies of their individual Orders.

Renegade Hunters of the White Robes are some of the most tolerant of the Hunters. These calm and methodical wizards always attempt to use diplomacy with the offending wizard. Trying to use words instead of force to bring the wizard back into the fold of the Orders. Such Hunters of the White Order usually tend to concentrate their magical abilities on spells of divining and protection.

Such spells are used to locate and hold wayward wizards, allowing the White Hunter to protect the innocents that might be surrounding him or his prey.



They seek to bring renegades back to stand in front of the Conclave for judgment whole and as undamaged as they can.

More than one renegade has misunderstood the kindness granted by a Hunter of the White Order as weakness and attempted to blindside the hunter. Needless to say, such dishonorable acts are dealt with in a swift fashion.

Hunters of the Red Order believe in freedom above all, and are thus some of the most laid-back hunters. They are not as open and trusting as those of the Hunters of the White Order, nor are they as cynical or ruthless as the Hunters of the Black Order.

Hunters of the Red Order use their magic to hold or hedge an offending wizard. But they only do so after it is apparent that the offender refuses to take heed of the options offered by the Red Hunter on compliance with the Laws of High Sorcery.

The Hunters of the Red Order excel at magic that creates false or misleading fantasies that only the offender can see or subtle magic that changes aspects of the Hunters of the Red Order to grant them special benefits and strengths.

Hunters of the Black Robes are the most ruthless of all the Hunters. They quash all infringements of the Law of High Sorcery with equal prejudice. The Hunters of the Black Order are also the Hunters that are mostly likely to overlook some infringements, as long as such is in the general interests of the Order of the Black Robes, that is. That does not mean to say that they are likely to let a major threat to High Sorcery go unpunished or ignored. They would use such situations only to further some of their member's goals, up to a point, before being forced to take action against it.

Many Hunters of the Black Order excel in the magic of the mind and soul, concentrating on such enchantments that would allow them to excise control over the offenders mind. Failing such magic, they bring dark secrets and fell magic brought to Krynn from the Abyss to bring down their quarry, body and soul.

The Mysteries of the Renegade Hunters

Renegade Hunters have many skills and tricks at their disposal. They are adept wizards, skilled in the rituals and secrets that all Wizards of High Sorcery learn during their apprenticeships. All Hunters are able to instill a sense of unease within others, and they have a knack of how to use that to get those they speak too to give them the answers that they seek.

Such skills are honed in the many places that the Hunters must travel to. Many have tried to fool a Hunter tracking a renegade wizard and learned to their chagrin that the Hunter is by no means a wide-eyed apprentice straight out of magic school. Hunters have an uncanny sense when it comes to the lies and concealments others use to distract them.

The intense training of the Hunter makes him wary, he constantly is watching the world about him for signs. More than one Hunter has been carelessly slain through a sneak attack by his quarry or brought low by unexpected magical assaults.

Of all the abilities that hunters are renowned for, it is their ability to survive in the wilderness whilst on the trail of their quarry, even though he may go through swamp or stream or over fen or mountain. They have learned the arts of reading nature, seeing the smallest of signs of someone's passing, skils no doubt passed on by the elves.

The training of the renegade hunter delves deeply into these areas of lore. Understanding the principles of magic allow them to use almost any spell that they have prepared from their spellbooks to counter or dispel the effects of spells being cast, an especially useful ability and one which makes them even more feared by those that they hunt.

Such arcane knowledge is not the only thing that instills fear in the hunted. The link between hunter and their patron Moon God is stronger than most wizards, allowing them to call upon the power of their patron, strengthening the Hunter' magic.

More frightening still is the ability of the Hunter to call upon the Moon Gods to interfere within the magic of the hunted. Many wizards have felt the power of their god suddenly lift away from them, causing their spells to falter or make the words for some spells slip from their minds altogether.

The Organization of the Renegade Hunters

The life of the Hunters is, more often than not, a lonely and all too short one. Although each Hunter feels a strong connection to their particular Order, there has never been a large enough collection of Hunters to form the usual societies and gatherings that wizards are renowned for.

Once a promising apprentice is noted, usually in the days following the initiate's Test, he is assigned to a Master Hunter for specialist training as a Hunter. The Master Hunter then teaches the apprentice the secrets and rituals of the Hunters, as well as continuing the apprentice's more routine magical training.

An apprentice Hunter is nearly always assigned to a Master Hunter from his Order. This is particularly true of the Hunters of the White Robes and the Hunters of the Black Robes. Rarely, Hunters from those Orders will take an apprentice from the Red Robes.

The actual organization of the Hunters is more of a loose collection of likeminded wizards. Each of them still answers to the Head of their Order, just as any other wizard must, as well as to the Head of the Conclave.

Because of the demands of running the Conclave, as well as each of the Orders, each Head of an Order assigns control over the Hunters within that Order to a Grandmaster Hunter.

The Grandmaster Hunter of any given Order has attained his station through tenacity, hardship, and perseverance, not to mention being looked upon favorably by their patron Moon God.

The Heads of the Orders, or the Head of the Conclave, command the Grandmaster Hunter to watch over selected wizards or seek out wizards to bring them to task for their breaches of the Laws of High Sorcery. It is also the Grandmaster Hunter's task to filter reports coming in from Hunters out in the world, as well as to report these findings to the respective superiors.

When the need for a Hunter arises, the Grandmaster Hunter always assigns a likely candidate from the same Order to the renegade's Order, seeking to keep such things "in house," as it were.

If the renegade wizard is more of a potential threat to his Order, more than one Hunter will be assigned to the task of bringing him before his peers. Dire threats have Hunters from two or all three of the Orders tasked to it. Such Hunters work together, pooling their knowledge of their own Orders in order to minimize the potential of losing the quarry.

The Grandmaster Hunter for the Order of the White Robes in 357 AC is a burly and rough looking Abanasinian Plainsman, Scareth Moonsheath. Scareth has deep scars on his hands and face, the signs of his many battles. He teaches his apprentices that they must be aware of the nature of the things that they are protecting, so they can make better use of it to bring down their prey.

Deloris Redcrescent is a slender and graceful half-elf, originally hailing from the wooded glens of Qualinesti. She has risen to become the Grandmaster Hunter for the Order of the Red Robes through her diligent work. She rarely tires and teaches her apprentices that a good Hunter needs to be akin to the hunters who stalk the wild places of the world, stealthy and tenacious. Among the Order of the Red Robes, she is famed for stalking a Red Robe by using transformative spells to hide herself. She served as the renegade's mount for many months before bringing him before the Council.

Of all the Grandmaster Hunters, Shard Blackstone is the newest. This dark dwarf is said to have come from the hidden dwarven city of Theibardin, one of the dwarven cities that comprise the dwarfhome of Thorbardin. Shard is as sour and grim as most dwarves, black in nature as well as name. Shard seized his position by personal battle with his predecessor. He is utterly ruthless and offers no quarter to those he is dispatched to deal with.

The Well of Talin

From the accounts of Patrick the Tall, traveling aesthetic for the Great Library of Palanthas
Dated Midsummer's Eve, 349 AC

Scattered across Ansalon are ruined cities great and small. Some were abandoned or torn by war; others were ravaged by the Cataclysm. The region of Goodlund holds one such ruin. Its name is Talin, and the well it contains is one of Ansalon's great mysteries.

The forsaken city itself is a curiosity, for legend holds it was home to a band of elves called the Talinesti. Mostly what is known about this ancient people is that they are now gone. I went to some lengths to uncover more information about them, and it seems theirs was a sad story.

The nearest living elves, a band of Kagonesti, are from the stretch of forest called Beast's Run, so naturally I asked them about the Talinesti. Most didn't talk to me or claimed not to speak the common trade tongue. Some seemed open to conversation until I mentioned the Talinesti, at which point they abruptly walked away without another word. Only one elf spoke to me on the subject.

Gray and worn, sorrow leapt from his eyes from the outset of our talk. He told how his people were at odds with a small group of radicals. These radical elves felt threatened by the Istaran Empire long before the last Kingpriest came to power. When differences of opinion became heated arguments, which in turn came to threats of injury, the radical elves left their cousins and founded the city of Talin. Though not small in size, the Talinesti managed to keep Istaran eyes off their new city. They didn't have the ability, however, to stave off the dangers of the Cataclysm. Most perished in that one night, and appeals to their old brethren fell on deaf ears. In addition to dealing with their own matters, the Kagonesti still felt wronged by the Talinesti for the departure. It was at this point that the elven storyteller could go no further.

The ruins of Talin were empty until the recent arrival of the Glug clan of gully dwarves. Highglug Muk the First credits himself with finding anything beneficial in the ruins, including the mysterious well. It is a kender by the name of Juniper Ambertail, however, that lays claim to discovering the well's power. The size of the well, about ten feet in diameter, means several gully dwarves at once can dip buckets into its dark depths and draw up water. The kender convinced herself it could also be a wishing well. Moments after she dropped in a coin, a sack of steel coins fell from the sky onto her head.

The kender returned to her home in Kendermore to tell the story. My two friends–the human Jakob Gronin and the dwarf Malachai Strongchisel–and I were outside the kender city when Miss Ambertail came upon us and told of her experience at the Well of Talin. We traveled to the ruins, soon followed by scores of kender whom Juniper made curious, and the debate started almost immediately. How did an ordinarily-looking well possess such power? Did the lost Talinesti create it, or was it another force?

Others soon joined in our debate. The centaurs of Wendle Wood and the small Kagonesti population in Balinost noticed the large groups of kender visiting the ruined city. Emissaries from both peoples were sent, and debates grew more numerous when the Glug clan found their well had gone dry. Experiments began, all with unexpected results.

When a few drops of water were poured into the Well of Talin, it provided a day's worth of water for all in attendance. Arguments were made for even how far down our buckets needed to drop to reach the water, so the kender Juniper dropped a lit torch into the well. Instead of seeing deeper into the well, Juniper witnessed a spectacular light show displaying the evaporation of the Maddening Springs, located in Goodlund's Southern Dairly Plains. Word later came that the Maddening Springs had indeed dried up. My friends and I were caught up in the talks between elves and centaurs, who issued an edict banning all from placing anything in the Well of Talin.

Highglug Muk the First took offense to "Big Ones" giving orders in "This Place," the city he ruled. The gully dwarf ruler sent an infiltration force, alternately labeled a mob by the elves and centaurs and a parade by the kender, to see to anything and everything be dropped into the Well of Talin. Little did his followers know their HighGlug had counted on the ensuing confusion. Muk the First expertly found his way to the Well of Talin and poured an entire canteen of water into it. Within an hour, a storm formed over the Southern Courrain ocean and caused flooding throughout much of Goodlund. The HighGlug's home was wrecked. While he publicly blamed the elves and centaurs for the storm, he privately decided Big Ones might be smarter than they look.

A couple of adventurous humans came to the Well of Talin after hearing about it in Kendermore. Convincing themselves great treasures were hidden at the bottom of the well, the humans gathered rope and piton to descend the interior of the well. Though attached to the same rope, the humans found themselves separated after thirty minutes of descent. The first saw a light below him and eagerly descended to it. Much to his embarassment and confusion, he found himself climbing out of the same well he entered. The second climber found water below him. When he lowered himself waist-deep into the water, a great swell of water carried him to the top, which now belonged to a well providing sustenance to a village in Solamnia.

The third human to enter the well was my friend Jakob. This instance still grieves my heart, for I've not seen him since his descent. My only hope that he still lives comes from a record in the Great Library. I returned there after my visit to the Well of Talin to discover one of Master Astinus's writings from several days before. The Master penned a short sentence noting the appearance of a man washing up on the shore of Sancrist. The name given to this stranger was Jakrub Granon. It is such a similar name that my next planned trip will be to Sancrist Isle.

My other friend, Malachai Strongchisel, is the only known non-gully dwarf to have visited the Well of Talin. He is also the defender of one of the most creative origin stories surrounding the well. The Kagonesti think the well's construction is consistent with the rest of the city's design and staunchly believe the Talinesti built it. They say elven sorcerers imbued the well with its chaotic magic. Some centaurs think the well the work of dwarves, but concede elven sorcerers are likely the cause of its powers. But a few centaurs learned in ancient lore believe the Well of Talin is the work of the Graygem. Drawing on an object that likely never existed in the first place caused a stir among all.

The centaurs argued the chaotic nature of the well is in line with stories of the Graygem, and the mythical artifact was certainly capable of producing a magical well. Malachai always counters those arguments with his own that feature Reorx. According to Malachai, the construction of the well could hardly be matched by any dwarven architects. The Forge God wove great power into the well he constructed. The nature of the power was inherently chaotic in order to trap the Graygem.

As for myself, I have searched the Great Library's records in hopes of finding Master Astinus's writings on the Graygem. My time is short, however, and what I have found mentions nothing of the Well of Talin. I feel myself torn between agreeing with my dwarven friend and yet also being convinced by the centaurs' arguments about the Graygem itself creating the well. I doubt anyone shall ever find the truth. It is interesting to note, however, that before Malachai and I left Talin, he dropped a lump of iron ore into the Well of Talin so that Reorx may have additional material to continue forging the world. Upon our return to Palanthas, Malachai found a fortune in coins at his home. He has enough to live out the rest of his life comfortably.

The greatest danger those in Goodlund face from the Well of Talin comes not from the well but from Balifor. Both the Black and Green Dragonarmies have congregated there. With the help of their dragons and their new kind of soldiers, these "draconians," the entire region of Balifor fell to their might with barely a struggle. Neither army has entered Goodlund, but all know one will in time. It has been learned roads are planned to be dug through Wendle Wood. Fortunately, Highglug Muk is cooperating with the centaurs and Kagonesti in keeping the Well of Talin a secret, though Muk would have been happier if the Glugs were the only ones who knew of it. The centaurs and elves know keeping the entire city of Kendermore quiet about the well will be tough, but even the kender are starting to recognize the importance of secrecy. Reports from Port Balifor have described the fierceness of the Dragonarmies.

No one knows if the Dragonarmies could put the Well of Talin to use, but none want to find out. If its power is somehow harnessed, control of Goodlund and possibly other places on Ansalon is assured. If their evil goddess, the Dark Queen they speak of, were to know of the well, perhaps all of Krynn could be lost.

Mythic Might: Artifacts of the Lost Towers of High Sorcery

I barely remember the day the Tower fell. People ask me about it, but it is locked in the mind of a child, where I can no longer reach it. Perhaps I don't want to. I remember the roar, like the sea during a storm. Indeed, I have not heard a storm in all my days on the sea that rivals that roar. Someone brought my father's helm to my mother in the weeks that followed. A year later, someone else returned his sword. It was once a great weapon, a blade of renown. It had been in our family since the early days of the empire, when the Pakin coup failed. What hangs now in the great hall is but its hilt and a foot of the blade, pitted with rust. The failed blade of a failed war. For six weeks I combed the rubble with the seneschal and other servants searching for my father's body. Too many were found, but not his. It sits buried somewhere amid the ruins. A burial on land, amidst the graves of wizards, is no place for an Ergothian.

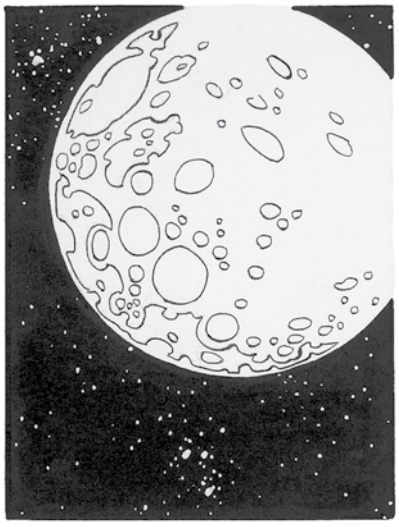
Journal of Arn Kar-thon, 938IA

The destruction of the Towers of High Sorcery in Daltigoth and Losarcum was, until the Cataclysm, the greatest disaster in Ansalon's long history. Tens of thousands died instantly, bodies burned, crushed or cut to pieces by debris. The catastrophe was only the beginning though, for even now, centuries later, the ruins of the Towers and the cities that held them are spoken of with awe and fear. Adventurers still enter the wreckage seeking the wealth of the cities. That few return serves only as further incentive for others to go, believing that great risks mean greater rewards.

In the months and years following the explosions, the Conclave dispatched dozens of expeditions to chart the ruins and to salvage whatever remained. Some returned, others did not. Some of these groups were wizards, while others were hired through agents of the Conclave, their true employers and purposes unknown. Many who returned spent the rest of their days haunted by voices and nightmares of the dead, some even taking their lives after going mad. The Tower of Wayreth is the only place on Krynn with detailed maps of the ruins–though few have ever seen them.

Artifacts:

The ruins of Losarcum and Daltigoth are permeated with magic. The explosion of the Towers threw stone across the miles, raining debris and death across the cities. Relics of the Towers can be found almost anywhere in the ruins, though most that were on the surface have been take, or are guarded by beings of dark might. The years have not been kind to the ruins. More buildings have toppled, taking other artifacts with them into the buried catacombs of the cities. The flooding of the Cataclysm submerged parts of Daltigoth even before the salvage groups could fully survey the sites. It is almost certain that shards and pieces lie amid the sand-choked ruins, and that twisted sea creatures stalk the depths.



Heartchamber Shards

Deep within the halls of each Tower of High Sorcery, lies a room of incredible power: the Heartchamber. In this room stands a model of the Tower, a focal point for the magic needed to destroy it. When the two Towers were destroyed during the Lost Battles, mages gathered in these rooms, channeling their art into the Master of the Tower, and he into the model itself. None of those present for the rituals

survived, but their magic lived on when the model itself exploded and cast stone shards out across the ruins. These pieces are of varying size and number, and most are red or black, the colours of Daltigoth's and Losarcum's Towers.

There are two main types of shards: greatshards and lesser shards. The former are few in number, and great in power. The Conclave went to great expense and effort to find and secure these relics, though some remain missing, even centuries later. Teams continually follow leads and scour the continent, searching for the larger pieces. Some dragons are rumored to possess greatshards, while agents of others hunt for them. Greatshards are about a foot long, and of varying shapes, but all have keen edges undulled by time or the elements. Lesser shards are much smaller and much more common. Many senior mages possess pieces, which are used as amulets and sentimental reminders of darker times. There are even a few that have been mounted into handles, the jagged stone forming the blade of a dagger, the only weapon a mage of the Conclave is traditionally allowed to use. Their powers are weaker, but possessing a number of them can grant a wielder a variety of benefits to their art.

Guardian Statues

I saw them only once, and briefly, for at the time, I was only an apprentice, barely past my test. They were magnificent in the cold white light. They glittered as though slick with dew, yet, by rights, they should have been covered in dust. I had studied the arts in my youth in Silvanost, but these were of a style unknown to me. Like the legendary Golems that fought for the Conclave in the Age of Dreams, they bristled with power, even before they were awakened. When their eyes blazed to life and they turned in unison, like Solamnic knights, I shivered. Woe to those poor fools that faced the stone swords they wielded. I was ushered out of the Tower soon after, sent through to Wayreth–I was too unskilled to defend the Tower, and the future of the Conclave lay with those like me. As Khadar saw us, the final group, through the portal, he bade us remember what we had done and why, and what we would see. At the time, I did not know what was to come. Now, in the twilight of my life, I wished I had died there, in a glorious battle for the sake of the art. I do not sleep as the aged should. In my dreams I fight that battle, the stone guardians surround me, and we are victorious. Then, I wake to the powerless body of an old fool in a godless world, and I weep. To wither now with age is nothing compared to watching the withering of the order itself. More painful than the loss of Silvanesti to the nightmare, it is like watching one's child and parent die at the same time.

Vanasar Ambrodel, Wayreth, 360 AC

Few within the Conclave knew of the massive malachite statues secreted within the bowels of the Towers, but after they were awakened, their story spread throughout the world of magic, as a tale of glorious battle, and a cautionary warning that even greater defenses are needed. Each Tower has at least twenty, but those of the ruined Towers were largely destroyed by the Knights of the Divine Hammer when they stormed the citadels of Losarcum and Daltigoth. The release of magic, combined with their own magical creation meant that not all were completely destroyed. Some of the animal-headed statues survived in pieces, and were later reconstructed by other mages, and a few are even rumored to have retained their enchantments. Most serve now as museum pieces, silent reminders of a dark time in magic's history. Other fragments were stolen from the sites by looters, making their way across the continent in the hands of thieves and collectors.

Kersala, the Minotaur pirate queen, is one such collector. Massively built, she leads her fleets in battle with the stone scimitar of the guardians, gifted to her by the ogre king of Daltigoth in the dark centuries following the first Cataclysm. The huge malachite weapon has saved her life on more than one occasion, its enchantment protecting her and some even say extending her life with the energy of its victims. Indeed Kersala's age is unknown, but she is ancient, a legendary scourge of the western seas.

The Stonefist ogres are a clan living high in the mountains of Southern Ergoth. Their leader is the bearer of the stone hand, gifted to him after he slays its previous wielder. In a grisly and dark ritual, the victors own hand is severed and the stone fist grafted in its place. The relic grants the holder even greater strength and some element of protection from edged weapons, but this effect is only limited. The artifact came to the ogres in the dark ages after Cataclysm, when the new rulers of Daltigoth began to explore their conquered city. For a time, the first wielder reigned as ogre king, defeating his enemies to rise to

the throne, but towards the end of his life, he abruptly abdicated, throwing the city into chaos, and led his loyal followers into the mountains to follow a vision he claimed to have had. They never returned; instead, they adopted a nomadic raiding lifestyle.

Other pieces of the statues survived, though most are damaged heavily. Some wizards possess heads of the statues, and have re-enchanted them, so the eyes glow red in the presence of magic. They make effective warning guards for laboratories and other secret chambers. Others are inert, and serve only as conversational curiosities and art objects.

Heartchamber Tiles

These tiles covered the walls of the heartchambers, their surfaces inscribed with arcane words of magic. Most were destroyed in the explosions, shattered and hurled across the cities, slaying those they struck, or embedding themselves in buildings. Full tiles are very rare, but not unknown. Some wizards use them or larger shards as power sources, embedding them in doors and spellbooks to provide potency to wards and guardians. The imbued magic augments the existing enchantments, both in length and power. The full shards are typically the size of a human hand, and as with lesser shards, many smaller fragments have found new purpose as amulets. They glow in the darkness with a rosy light, the inscriptions in Magius that cover them streaming bright white light when held by a spellcasting mage.

Grove Tree Fragments

When the Towers exploded, the trees that surrounded them were also destroyed. The firestorm incinerated the foliage and the smaller branches, while the larger parts were smashed apart like kindling. Few large fragments remain, many were simply burned up in the conflagration that followed the fall of the Towers, or were taken by looters soon after. The remaining charred portions are highly prized by alchemists and wizards as the basis for spellbook inks, while the trunk wood is often used to make amulets, staves and rods, containers, chests, and doors for laboratories. Wizards of the desert nomads of Khur are known for carrying wooden punch-daggers, ancient pieces of the trees of Losarcum. Slung around the neck of the wizards' billowing robes, these heirlooms are polished by scented oils and centuries of use. There are rumors, too, that seeds of the outermost trees survived, and have been grown by mages or warped into other forms of magical construct. Some are believed to have grown among the ruins, and guard those places as their ancestors did for millennia.

Denizens of the Ruins:

I cannot sleep, for when I close my eyes I see the Tower fall, again and again, I see the spirits of the dead flit about in rage, angry at their deaths and at our trespassing. Our expedition has found little. I fear looters have picked over the site long before us; what they did not take, the ogres have taken. Our numbers continue to dwindle. Hasenal is lashed to a litter now, gibbering in the old church tongue of Istar. The others don't know what he is saying, but I do. He curses us, calls us infidels and killers of children, and he recounts the slaying of many wizards on his blade in the battle. His words sting, for they are not his own, but those of a spirit that has possessed him, and is venting its wrath. He is not the first; two others suffered the same fate. Two nights ago, our third night here, Finamec the white, one of our most learned, began to chant in the night. Then he rose and stood in the camp, still chanting what I later realized was a prayer to Paladine, and cut his own throat. Raghart attacked us after he was taken. He had already slain two apprentices and we were left with no choice but to kill him. Both Raghart and Finamec grinned wickedly before they died, but their eyes changed to terrified recognition as their life ebbed from them. The spirits had released them, only long enough to die horribly. Morale is very low among the troop. We left as eleven, and return as little more than half that. My hope is that we can escape with the dawn, before the ogres gain enough courage to come in after us. No one sleeps; we all eye each suspiciously–no one knows who will turn next.

Purvass the Red, in Daltigoth.

Winds howl through the ruins now. Little grows in Losarcum or Daltigoth, life has largely deserted the gravesites, but they are by no means empty. The destruction of the Towers, combined with the massive loss of life, was an event unparalleled in the wizard's history. In only a few traumatic seconds, tens of thousands of lives were snuffed out. From this wreckage, from the magic unleashed and the souls slain, new creatures were born, monstrosities that rival the terrors unleashed by the Greygem.

Shard wights, horrific beings cursed to unlife wander the ruins, preying upon the unwary and the greedy. The especially love magic users, for they hunger for magic more than anything else. They are the dead of the cities–wizards, warriors, and citizens alike, each cursed by a piece of the heartchamber Tower model, embedded within their bodies. Their eyes glow with a pale red light, their bodies desiccated by the centuries. They hunger for the living, for they regain a small piece of their vitality and intelligence as they consume them. The more they devour, the more they hunger, and the more dangerous they become. There are tales of some shard wights who are indistinguishable from the living, their bodies whole and healthy, leading others among the ruins, preying upon treasure-seekers. They continue their hunts, relentlessly, in a vain hope that they might be released from the curse of undeath.

The destruction gave birth to two types of creatures, horrors that have been called elementals by scholars who have seen them and survived. Born of the wreckage, the death, and the magic, earth elementals haunt the ruins, patrolling the territory they now claim as their own, killing any trespassers they find. Bones, wood and bits of fine masonry jut from their bodies, great heaps of earth and stone, their shard eyes glowing with an unearthly red light. They are beings of intelligence, but the circumstances of their birth have made them quite evil and insane. Massive fists have left crumpled armor and broken weapons, grim reminders to those who wander the ruins of the fate of those before.

The screaming winds of the ruins are not of this world; they are born of the magic and the dying screams of the victims. They form themselves into skull-faced whirling clouds of smoke and dust whenever living beings appear, sometimes attacking, sometimes merely terrorizing, driving the interlopers mad with the death-screams of their creation. Sometimes they fall silent, and other abominations arise in their place. Ghosts and other undead prowl the ruins, spectral minions of warriors, wizards, and citizens, appearing at night to reenact their final hours, dying with anguished screams at the coming of the dawn. It is little wonder Daltigoth never recovered from the destruction and is now abandoned except for ogre squatters. The phantoms whisper throughout the daylight, warrior cries and the spidertalk of magic, overlapping and twisting, weaving their way into the heads of trespassers, warning and questioning–threatening and pleading, to drive any who venture there unprotected insane.

There are other perils among the ruins, monsters that have begun to cover and reclaim the building shells. Once simple plants, the magic and the death that permeates the sites twisted them. Few explorers realize the creeping doom that surrounds them, bloodthirsty and implacable, sliding silently among the stones and rubble, seeking life to slake their hunger. From within the ruins and catacombs, other horrors emerge. Mostly nocturnal, surviving scraps of journals tell of red eyes staring out of the lengthening shadows, staying just out of firelight until they strike.

The ruins of the Towers are not for the faint of heart. Few sites on Krynn are as treacherous, but few offer the rewards they promise. To explore them is to invite disaster and glory.

To Justarius, Master of the Conclave,

I pen this missive in response to the question you posed at the last meeting of the Conclave. Yes, the first spellbook that Raistlin owned is kept in the Tower of High Sorcery in Palanthas, and I do have access to it, as it wasn't sealed in the laboratory. You should forgive me the time it took to find it, but it is such a nondescript volume that when I carried out the inventory of my late master's possessions, it escaped my notice. The book is, as one would expect, the typical primer that the late Theobald Beckman provided his students with: a hard leather-bound book.

When I found the tome, I carried out a thorough analysis of it. I cannot say with certainty that it posseses any secret, lost, or forbidden knowledge, nor do I believe any cataclysmic spells lie within its pages. However, as far as I can determine it is just the spellbook of a novice mage who has yet to leave his mark in the world and, in fact, most of the spells contained within are considered the most basic of any wizard's repertoire. The true gems lie in the margin notes, and the insight that my shalafi displayed even at such a young age. It is quite astounding how brightly his true genius shines, and his in-depth comments on techniques usually dismissed as common tricks are amazing.

I have enclosed some of the more interesting pages from the spellbook with this letter. I hope it finds you well.

Yours in magic,
Dalamar, Head of the Order of the Black Robes.

Detect Magic

Lowest rank spell
Miscellaneous Divination
Spoken commands and gestures required
Fairly long duration of at least one minute and
must keep concentration for the spell to continue working

To cast Detect Magic you must form a triangle with the thumbs and index fingers of your hands and held it to your eyes for about five seconds, all the while concentrating on seeing the unseen magical auras that surround objects and creatures.

The phrase **batin corak sihir saya** is required to bring the magical energies to life and both the last syllable of the third word and the entire second word should be emphasized or the spell will have no effect whatsoever.

Once you have finished casting, if you keep concentrating on seeing the magical auras you will gain a greater amount of information. With the spell in effect, you can first detect the presence of magical auras, then the number of magical auras, and the strength of them. As a last step you can sometimes, depending on your level of erudition and your knowledge of magic, tell to which magical school the aura belongs. When you stop concentrating the effect ends.

A powerful magical aura can utterly negate weaker auras within the spell effect and can mask other auras preventing you from knowing the schools of magic.

The effect penetrates lesser obstacles but more than a foot of stone and metal blocks it almost completely, as does the thick skull of my twin brother. The latter, it would seem, blocks any divinations.

This is a great spell for scouting or a quick getaway but never cast it on a kender!

Natural terrain hazards, such as mud puddles, or clever tactics, such as leaving flour in the floor or throwing it on the air, can be used to track an invisible creature and detect where it is. Take care to avoid such hazards or use them to your advantage.

Invisibility

Low rank spell

Miscellaneous Illusion spell

Spoken commands and gestures required, and an eyelash encased in a bit of gum Arabic.

Targeted on you or another being weighting 300 pounds or less

Lasts at least 3 minutes and, as the mage grows in power, so does the duration.

To cast an Invisibility spell you need to have an eyelash encased in a bit of gum Arabic. You deposit it in the palm of your right hand and close it into a fist. At the same time, with your left hand, you make a covering motion in front of your face.

The words battin bentuk tak? kelithatan are uttered carefully and with care to emphasize the last word including the small pause need for the spell to work.

Once the spell is complete you and your gear will be rendered invisible to any form of sight, including special abilities such as elvensight. Any item you drop will turn visible, and you cannot carry a lit light source with you for the spell wont work on it. Any attack or aggressive action, such as casting an offensive spell or pushing someone from a cliff, will render you visible, despite the spells? stated duration.

Certain creatures that hunt by scent, such as wolves, can find you despite your invisibility, so avoid such hazards at all costs.

You can see your own body while using the spell, so you never lose that frame of reference. If you cast the spell on another person you cannot see that person, so bear in mind that you do not automatically disbelieve the illusion because you are the caster.

There are many spells that counter invisibility so do not rely on it; a true wizard should not use such a spell as a crutch.

You can cast non-damaging spells without breaking the invisibility, even those who summon monsters but you cannot cast any offensive spell at all without breaking the illusion.

While invisible you are not silenced, nor are you incorporal, so in close quarters this spell might not be as useful outdoors.

Magic Missle

Low rank spell
Offensive Evocation
Spoken commands and gestures required
Fairly medium range of at least 100 feet which can increase with power
Affects up to five very close creatures

To cast a Magic Missile, you should draw an infinity symbol three times in the air with your index finger, and then break it in the exact center with the same finger.

The words **sihir shirak anak** should then be uttered as you finish the last infinity symbol, putting especial emphasis on the last word. If these steps are not followed, the spell will fail to manifest at all.

The spell will take form as a missile of force that flies unerringly to the target. You must concentrate on the person you wish to injure, or the spell will not function. You must also be able to see the target.

As you grow in power the spell improves with you, and you can send up to five force missiles at five different targets, or all to the same creature.

Despite a number of experiments on animals, it is not possible to target a specific body part with the spell. It will just fly and strike the target in a random place, which can be a leg in one casting or an ear in another.

The spell cannot be used to damage any kind of object, except for animated objects. I can attest the veracity of this thanks to my mercenary days.

The missiles never ever miss.

If you want to affect multiple creatures they should be no more than 15 feet apart, which is quite difficult to calculate in the field. If they are apart the spell will not fail, but the creatures it affects will be essentially random.

As this is a force effect, it can harm intangible creatures such as ghosts, or so the ancient books of wizardry relate.

According to my research a common low rank spell known as Shield can prevent this spell from causing any injury. Other esoteric effects that negate force can also negate the effect.

Prestidigitation

Lowest rank spell
Miscellaneous Universal spell
Spoken commands and gestures required
Very close range of 10 feet
An hour in duration.

This spell is wonderful for putting small shows for children and adults alike. It can be used to entertain; its long duration means that you can put quite a display for your audience. Combining it with flash powder and other common illusionist parlor tricks can enhance an otherwise dull sleight of hand performance to high levels.

To cast a Prestidigitation spell, one must simply stand still and move both hands counter-clockwise 7 times, with the middle, index and thumb held together and the last two fingers pressing on the palm.

The words **perubahan bentuk cilin sihir** must be intoned with no especial emphasis on any word, so that the casting is even throughout the entire recitation, and no word is spoken louder than another. There is no danger in miscasting this spell, but an incorrect utterance ruins it.

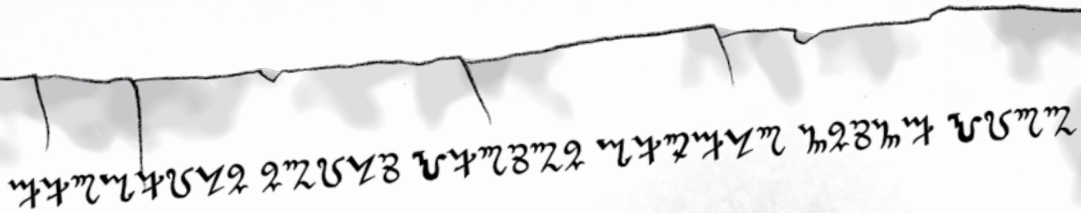
When the casting is finished the spell allows you to create very minor magical effects with severe limitations.

Note that changes to objects, beyond cleaning, soiling, or moving them do not last more than the 1 hour time limit the spells has.

The applications of the spell are as follows:

1 Lift, slowly, one object of up to 1 pound of weight.
2 Chill, warm or flavor up to 1 pound of non-living material.
3 Color, clean or soil items in a 1 foot cube each application
4 It can create objects of up to 1 pound of weight, but they are extremely fragile and prone to breaking and cannot be used for anything.
5 Create very minor sounds, much less than Ghost Sound.
6 Create a bit of light, much less than Dancing Lights

This is one spell that should be combined with Ghost Sound or Silent Image to create semi-solid illusions and effects, such as extinguishing a candle or blowing away a leaf.



Read Magic

Lowest rank spell
Miscellaneous Divination
Spoken commands and gestures required
Long duration of at least ten minutes

To cast a Read Magic spell you take a clear crystal prism, which must not contain any impurities, and put it in front of a source of light. When the light is thusly focused, you must point it to the text you wish to read and let it dance over it while concentrating on the formulae in Magius that all mages use to write their spells on scrolls or books.

The words **mencelik kulit bentuk cermin oktom blnu** must be intoned in a strong voice; the emphasis should be on the first syllable of the first word. Continue saying the other words in a fairly low-key tone until the last word, which should be emphasized.

Once the spell is in effect you can read about a page a minute, or one scroll per minute.

Once you have deciphered the personal code of a mage you don't need to use it again to read the same book. My teacher still does not suspect where I learned some of the spells he could not teach to my idiotic classmates and I do not plan to enlighten him. Regrettably, knowing the personal notation of one book does not let you know the formulaic shorthand for all books, and the spell is needed every time you come across a new book or scroll, even if it is written by a mage whose notation you already deciphered.

I found out that, if you have enough knowledge of magic theory and its applications, you can identify other spell effects guarding the magical writing, such as warding glyphs of various strengths. I have the theory that it would let me identify the legendary Great Symbols of Magius, of which I have learned by the hushed conversation of my teacher and other visiting mages, but the level of knowledge needed is not still within my grasp.

[illegible]

Sleep

Low rank spell

Offensive Enchantment

Spoken commands and gestures required, as well as a pinch of fine sand, rose petals or a live cricket.

Affects one or more weak living creatures within a ten feet radius of where the effects takes place, affecting weaker creatures first and completely failing to affect more powerful creatures. Strong willed creatures can resist the effect of the spell.

The spell lasts at least one minute and, as the mage grows in power, so does the duration.

To start casting the spell, a pinch of fine sand should be taken from your pouch with your left hand and slowly released onto a flat surface to maximize the effectiveness of the spell. In lieu of sand, rose petals can be used, but they are expended and disappear once the casting is done. Also, unlike the sand, at least two of the rose petals should be ground together in the palms of both hands, though the exact number does not matter. These petals may be either fresh or preserved and the fresher they are the stronger the spell is.

Supposedly the spell can also be cast with a live cricket caught between your thumb and index finger, though the lack of availability of live crickets has prevented me from trying this version of the spell.

As soon as the sand has all but left your hand, you should slowly move your right arm in an arc with your index finger pointing toward the creature you want to affect, or the general area in which you want the effect to manifest. Concentration is paramount to prevent the spell from manifesting in a different locale, or targeting a different creature, so you should at all times keep a perfect clear image of where the effect should start.

Lastly the words Ast tasarak sinuralan krynawi should be spoken, with special emphasis on the first word and on the last syllable of the third word. Mispronouncing one of the words can ruin the whole casting and you should avoid any emphasis in the last word as the spell might backfire and affect you.

Charm Person

Low rank spell
Offensive Enchantment
Spoken commands and gestures required
Fairly close range of at least 25 feet, which can increase with power
Affects one humanoid creature. Strong willed creatures can resist the effect of the spell.
The spell lasts at least one hour and, as the mage grows in power, so does the duration.

After the duration elapses, you should make yourself scarce, as the target will usually question why they were so friendly with a complete stranger or someone they just met.

The spell will fail if cast on animals or creatures that are not humanlike.

Never cast it on kender again; they are annoying when you barely know them but even more so as friends.

To cast a Charm Person spell, you must visualize your target in your mind, picturing his face clearly. Use subtle movements with both of your hands, drawing small circles on the air, and finally pointing at the creature with your right hand.

The words **tan–tago musalah** should be spoken in a soft voice, with a small pause between tan and tago, and a longer pause between tago and musalh. Special emphasis should be placed on the last syllable.

If the spell takes hold, the target should start acting friendlier to you. It should hear all your words as if a most trusted friend uttered them. Care should be taken to remain that way.

You must either speak the language of the target creature to give him orders or ask question, or be very, very good at pantomime.

A strong willed individual, such as Sturm, can resist the spell more often than a weak willed individual, such as Caramon. In that vein, a Charm Person spell does not make the big oat more protective that he already is.

You cannot usually give your charmed friend orders that go against their nature, such as asking a knight to steal, but sometimes you can convince him with the force of your personality. But such attempts are usually doomed from the beginning.

Tales

These are the tales the elders tell around the fire late at night. Some of these stories are credible and well-founded, others are less than accurate and may be what is known as a "kender tale". Yet each story deserves to be told and shared, either for the wisdom it hold or simply to provide a good laugh.

Read on to learn of the Dragonarmies' defeat in Kenderhome, of those enslaved by the forces of darkness, and of the heroic adventures of Lord Toede. What you bring away from them is up to you!

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Defeat in Kenderhome

Report of Corporal Junior Grade Information Correspondent Carron Gulchul; Black Dragonarmy, of Operations in Kenderhome
To be forwarded to the High Command of the Black Dragon Army in Neraka.

It is my unfortunate duty to inform you of the loss of both Highlord Toede, his son Lord Captain Toade, and the battle for Sikk'et Hul. Although the illustrious Highlord was not with us on this particular mission I have been informed via magical correspondence with my contact in Flotsam of his death. So I have recorded this and I am passing this information along in this report as it is of the utmost importance. Further information of Highlord Toede's demise will be recounted in full detail in a separate report you will be receiving from my contact in Flotsam. Included in this report are my records on our failed mission to Sikk'et Hul and the eventual defeat at the hands of the kender of Kenderhome.

We set sail on the war galley 'Silver Spear' captained by Lieutenant Poliander from Flotsam on Loot 13th, 352 AC. Aboard ship we had Lieutenant Poliander's crew, and a war band of twenty-five hobgoblins and ten bugbears that comprised our heavy infantry unit and one hundred goblins for light infantry. Our orders were to invade the city of Manic, the capital of the goblin nation of Sikk'et Hul, assume control of their government, make examples of any rebellious factions and conscript the goblins there into service for the glory of the Dark Queen's magnificent army.

After more than three weeks of traveling around the northern coast of Ansalon from Flotsam, we headed around the Tanith peninsula and headed south through the Straits of Algoni. This is where the trouble began. As we traveled along the east shore of Northern Ergoth our ship ran afoul of a strong storm. Lieutenant Poliander wanted to drop anchor and wait the storm out, but Captain Toade ordered the Lieutenant to continue through the storm so the Captain was forced to comply. During the first night in the storm we lost seven goblin warriors and two of Lieutenant Poliander's crew. The next morning the weather still had not improved and Captain Toade ordered Lieutenant Poliander to drop anchor. However, before the Lieutenant could comply the hull of the war galley was torn asunder by a number of jagged rocks. The ship was smashed repeatedly against the reefs and started taking on water. Captain Toade ordered an evacuation of the ship and all warriors under his command complied. I joined Captain Toade and his personal bugbear guard on a supply raft and we made our way to shore.

By that evening all the survivors had gathered together. From the shipwreck we lost six hobgoblins, thirteen goblins, Lieutenant Poliander and most of his crew. Captain Toade sent out goblin scouts into the surrounding forests to determine our position. The rest of the troops were ordered to salvage whatever supplies they could find along the shoreline and to make camp on the tree line of the beaches despite the storm overhead. By the next morning the storm had subsided and order had been established.

The goblin scouts indicated that there was a congregation of kender to the north that appeared to have taken shelter in a number of caves during the storm. From my maps we determined that this was probably the kender village of Hidal near the Ogaral border, which placed us more than one hundred miles from our intended location of Manic. This also meant that the kender city of Hylo was approximately thirty to forty miles south of us. Captain Toade decided that the best course of action was to invade Hylo and take whatever sailing vessels they may possess and to continue our mission to Sikk'et Hul.

As the captain made plans to deploy the war band into the surrounding region we were alerted to the fact that an intruder had made it past the perimeter of the camp. It was not surprising that the intruder was a kender. He was dragged by his collar and deposited at the foot of Captain Toade. This particular kender did not at all seem intimidated by our half-goblin captain. In fact he seemed rather exited just to be surrounded by hundreds of goblins. The kender introduced himself as Bluster Padfoot and through his incessant chattering implied that he would be happy to show the captain around Kenderhome. By the way the kender was prattling on it was evident that he thought we were "friendly goblins" from Sikk'et Hul. At that point Captain Toade made an executive decision. He declared that any kender we encountered between here and Hylo had to be exterminated in order to keep our attack on the city of Hylo secret for as long as possible. So he fed the kender to the troops. There wasn't much meat on him, but I have to agree that the decision did raise morale among the warriors.

After a brief rest during the day the troops headed south. Orders were given to trick any kender we encountered into thinking we were from Sikk'et Hul so that they could be lured behind our lines and killed. This plan worked for most of the night as we progressed through the forests until nearly daybreak when we stumbled across a whole nest of kender living in the branches of the trees above us. These kender were not so easily fooled and scattered into the treetops. It was understood that our cover had been blown and it was only a matter of time until the kender mounted a defense.

By the time the sun had risen kender began arriving in small numbers, then in larger numbers throughout the day. We were surprised to discover that it was not kender warriors, but simply large groups of civilians that wanted to get a look at us. Since they were not impeding our progress in any way the captain ordered that we continue to march and for our troops to reserve the small number of missile weapons we had on hand for a real fight. It is unnerving to have hundreds of kender staring and whispering and pointing at you from behind trees and bushes and from tree tops. I admit that our troops are disciplined, but the leering of the kender was more than our goblin troops could take and on a number of occasions the hobgoblin commanders had to order back a stray goblin warrior that had rushed off into the woods to pound a kender skull.

By midday information from a goblin scout indicated that the beaches of the shoreline were rapidly diminishing to the south so Captain Toade passed the order to tighten ranks and move fully into the forest and away from the shore. An hour after midday we encountered our first real resistance. Warriors on the front line started taking fire from missile weapons. The attack was hardly severe and was mostly comprised of small rocks and sticks. Despite the inadequacy of the attack Captain Toade called a halt and ordered the troops to retreat and form ranks.

A kender waving a green and white polka dotted flag cheerfully announced that she only wanted to talk. The kendermaid was allowed through the ranks and taken to the captain. She politely introduced herself as Fallana Windseed and respectfully insisted that we stop attacking the kender of Kenderhome and perhaps turn around and go back where we came from. Like his father, Captain Toade is a noble and cunning leader. He explained to the kender that he was merely trying to get his troops home to Sikk'et Hul and that all the kender deaths up to this point had been accidental. Goblins can be an emotional folk if provoked. So he suggested to "Lady" Windseed that if the kender would just stay out of their way he would have his goblins back home in no time and out of the kender's enchanting forests. His sweet talk moved the kendermaid and she agreed to inform her people to allow the army to pass unmolested! Amazingly the kender began to disappear from view.

After this encounter the captain ordered a rest for his troops. He clearly believed that the army would be able to simply walk straight into Hylo without any sort of resistance. That day, as we rested, a strange thing happened. Everyone had the feeling that there were shadows among us flitting from bush to bush. The captain suspected that the kender were up to something. But no one had been attacked and no one could find any intruders in the camps. So they continued to rest throughout the day and into the evening. It wasn't until the troops were making preparations to continue when we realized that more than half of the army's weapons had been stolen! The kender had sneaked into the encampments and taken our weapons and what meager supplies we had on hand. The goblin warriors were furious. A number of them even grumbled that the captain had been too easy on the kender and we should have slaughtered them when we had the chance. These four goblins were gagged and caned for the enjoyment of the rest of the troop before we began moving south again. The warriors without weapons were instructed to find rocks, sticks and anything they could that could be used to kill a kender.

That night, as we continued south, we knew there were kender trailing us. Our scouts and warriors on the front line caught site of them. With the goblin's superior night vision the kender were unable to hide from us in the dark. In fact some kender appeared so confident in their ability to hide that the hobgoblin commanders issued the order to start attacking any kender that came within arm's reach. The captain agreed to the tactic and even suggested that some of the goblin warriors circle around and try to heard the kender, like quail, into the waiting arms of the army. The first pass worked wonderfully and we managed to kill a handful of wretched kender sneaks. That first massacre was the beginning of trouble.

As the goblin warriors got more confident they fanned out farther, chasing the squirrelly kender. The kender began leading the warriors on chases away from the main unit. Unleashed, the goblins took off into the forest in a bloodlust, chasing down kender. Some of the hobgoblin commanders even joined the hunt. By the time the captain and the bugbears were able to restore order we had lost eight hobgoblins, nineteen goblins and one bugbear. The captain was furious. His troops were deteriorating before his eyes. At this rate we would not have enough troops to force our way through the city of Hylo to their harbor. As the troops assembled and continued reports came in from various scouts that the bodies of our warriors had been found. Some were in pit traps or hanging from trees, all of them dead. Some appeared to have been ambushed by multiple attackers. The odd thing is that when these goblins disappeared into the forest, no one heard them scream.

The army had to slow its pace as they encountered more traps on route to the city. Eventually Captain Toade ordered the troops to circle to the west to hopefully avoid any more traps. The plan seemed to work and by morning we began heading southeast and it was evident that we would reach the city in half a day's march.

Shortly after daybreak the captain was hailed from above. Seated in a tree above us was a kender that had gone unnoticed. The young kender was dressed in furs and leaned over an axe he had laying across his lap. He waved to the captain and said that we were headed in the wrong direction if we were on our way to Sikk'et Hul. A goblin warrior nearby threw a rock at the kender who easily

dodged it; the captain ignored the infraction. The captain stated that he and his men wanted to visit Hylo before heading home. Then he asked if the kender had found any of the warrior's weapons lying about. The kender, who I later discovered goes by the name of Kronn Thistleknott, stated that his people had found a number of weapons and would happy to return them when the goblins made it home safely. Then he insisted that the goblins were actually not welcome in Hylo and would need to continue south. Captain Toade was outraged by the slight. When he asked why we were not allowed to visit Thistleknott explained that the famed Solamnic Grand Master Gunthar uth Wistan was in town and that he advised against the goblins staying there. When the captain heard this news his demeanor changed immediately. He laughed and said that if that was what the Grand Master wanted, then by all means he would take his people directly home to Sikk'et Hul. The kender nodded, stood up and disappeared among the leaves of the surrounding trees.

The captain called for his commanders and instructed them to prepare their troops to move out. However, he was not about to pass up the chance to find and kill the Solamnic Grand Master. The kender had proven their skill at subterfuge and trap making, but when it came to brute force the kender were no match for his army. He declared that the streets of Hylo would run red with the blood of the kender slaughtered in that city and he would personally find and kill Gunthar uth Wistan himself. With a forced march the city would only have a few hours to prepare. He felt confident that the majority of the population would be weak and ineffectual against his forces as long as he could keep the troops clear of any traps. He figured that each kender warrior killed would provide one more weapon for his army.

The troops were eager to get moving and the first couple of hours of travel were uneventful until they saw the leaning spires of the citadel of Hylo through the treetops. It was then that the kender made their stand. Kender archers attacked from the cover of the trees and the goblins took cover behind rocks and trees. They had been instructed to work together scaling the trees and before long many of the kender archers were killed or forced to fall back. By my estimate a dozen of our goblins were lost in the exchange. I suggested that we fall back and reconsider the attack and Captain Toade struck me down and ordered the troops to continue on.

From the north, a group of ten kender armed with nothing but sticks began to fire off rocks at the troops. A hobgoblin commander and a detachment of

goblins were sent to pursue them while the rest of the army continued on. As the army passed ,the goblins returned, or what we thought were the goblins. Instead it was the same ten kender and they were wearing the helmets of our goblin warriors. Among the ten, one was clearly Kronn Thistleknott. What was so infuriating about the kender was their laughter! They thought this was funny. The kender began taunting the goblins and especially Captain Toade himself. They called him Lord Toade ruler of Stench and asked him if he would like a last meal of "flies" before his eventual defeat. The barbs cut deep and before long half the army had broken ranks and took off after the kender. Captain Toade was among them so I dutifully followed.

The troops were lead down a steep ravine after the chuckling, jeering kender. Some of them stopped to throw rocks while others barreled down the hillside in a rage. Captain Toade stopped at the edge of the ravine. He seemed to have regained his senses and looked around to study the terrain. Then he began to shout at the top of his lungs and gave orders for retreat. Only a handful of the warriors heeded his calls, but for most of them it was too late. From all around the ravine kender popped their heads up. Some rolled large rocks down the ravine while others began firing arrows and well placed stone bullets at the goblins. This tactic eliminated about half of our forces.

Then kender warriors brandishing forked sticks, clubs, and whips appeared from out of the nearby bushes on both sides of the ravine. Captain Toade ordered the remaining troops to form ranks around him but the field was in disarray. The kender warriors kept appearing and fleeing, drawing the goblin warriors into the woods where more kender would ambush them. Few battles were out in the open. When kender did come out of the forest it was always in groups. They worked together to flank opponents and protect each others back. Their attacks were well coordinated and deadly.

Within the first few minutes of the battle it was clear that we were out matched. Kender warriors, one of who was Kronn Thistleknott himself, surrounded Captain Toade. He put up a brave fight, but in the end he was defeated, along with the rest of the army. I am the only survivor of the battle because I threw down my weapon and surrendered to our attackers.

I was taken into Hylo and I can see that we greatly underestimated the number of kender living here. In fact we underestimated the kender race as a people. Currently I am being held in a small room of the citadel overlooking Hylo. My captors have strangely been cordial enough to give me anything I ask for, except my freedom. I am awaiting trial here in Hylo which the kender claim should be "quite exciting." I'm not sure what that means, but it scares me.

The kender allowed me the use of a magical mirror with which I could speak with my contact in Flotsam and he informed me of the Dragon Highlord's demise. They also provided me with my journals with which I was able to compile this report. The kender have promised to deliver this message to Neraka with all haste. I can only hope they are telling the truth and that this message reaches you.

Cpl. Jr Grade Information Correspondent Carron Gulchul

The Journal of Falyrnthesal Haramdass

25 Autumn Dark 349 AC

With quill and parchment at hand once again , I feel relaxed and renewed, despite my situation. This morn I woke, bruised and muddied, in a cage, exposed to the elements, a prisoner of ogre slavers in the employ of the Green Dragonarmy. Three and twenty of us had been captured three days ago during the flight of the elven people from our ancestral home; we were a group of more than one hundred when the ogres fell upon us. May E'li's light guide those who did not surrender.

Though I am hopeful, I am no less a slave now than when I awoke. At irregular intervals during my capture, an exceptionally foul ogre would enter the cage, and pick a prisoner seemingly at random, and unceremoniously bludgeon them out the door to some unknown fate. This day at noon was my day.

The ogre commander, whose name have since learned is Gfgar, entered the cage and muttered, "Look at your feet if you want to keep your eyes." It was not until I heard his massive footsteps toward me that I realized he spoke in the ogre tongue. The ogre's handling was less brutish than it seemed, though by no means comfortable. I felt no need to resist when asked what other languages I knew. I quickly discovered he was as much examining me as roughing me up. I soon found myself in a cold though well-lit room, transcribing orders, commands, and missives in quadruplicate, and marveling at the intrepid thinking of simple-minded ogres. I am hopeful to think that my time on Krynn has not yet ended, that I might yet again see my home.

28 Autumn Dark 349 AC

My days are long and my duties many; I will not find time each day to pen this journal, pieced together from scraps of parchment and hidden upon my person, so I will make do when time permits. I am privileged to know by the graces of my position that Gfgar's command, a single brigade of ogre mercenaries, is bound for a base camp somewhere in northern Silvanesti.

4 Winter Come 349 AC

Today we joined with a vast army, and I saw our doom. The number of tents and wagons was too many to count, but this Green Dragonarmy is comprised of ogres, humans, goblins, and creatures spawned from the abyss itself, which I have learnt are called draconians. And dragons. No less than three great green-scaled beasts were visible as we marched into the camp. I know now why the elves fled our ancient home so quickly, for there is naught that can stand against this army.

For a short time I was comforted to know that the might of these invaders comes in the form of dragons returned from legend. Comforted, because I also know the Speaker is guardian of at least one of the fabled Dragon Orbs–those relics known to have sent the dragons away once before. Yet even after Lorac destroys these creatures of legend, there are more vile goblins and the like in this camp

than elves in all of Silvanost. And these draconian creatures; is all of Krynn outside my sylvan home cruel and vile?

8 Winter Come 349 AC

Gfgar presented me as a prize to the commander of this camp, a human by the name of Salah-Khan, claiming I knew all languages and was possessed of no spine. Till now Gfgar's insults were nothing to me, but I found this parting insult poignant. The truth of it struck my heart as I translated his words for Commander Salah-Khan.

Salah-Khan has taken me as his personal scribe. I find myself less repulsed at his feral appearance than upon our first meeting, but what he has gained in countenance is lost to a most annoying habit of presuming all words spoken in his presence are falsehoods. Thus is the reason for his ever present aide, the black-robed mage.

I know scarce little of this magic-user, save that he is not an ogre, nor a goblin, and at Salah-Khan's command, he uses what I can only presume is a truth-detecting spell with which he confirms or decries the speaker's words. When he speaks, it is gentle, barely above a whisper, and he is ever hidden in the shadowy places; I have yet to see him abroad in the sun. Though I have seen little evidence of it, it galls me to think what atrocities this evil mage has inflicted to wield his power, and it frightens me to think what vile creature exists beneath those robes.

12 Winter Come 349 AC

Silvanost is so very far away. We travel toward Khur.

13 Winter Come 349 AC

Today we have reached the northern edges of the elven wood. The moment my escritoire was erected and myself chained to it, I retrieved my journal (I was right in assuming the guards could not read its contents) in excitement.

Griffons! They flew high in the sky, hidden in the sun, but I saw them nonetheless. The reach of the Skyguard is long indeed to search out survivors here.

Alas, my arrival in this human city has cast a shadow over reborn hope. We joined a brigade of the Red Dragonarmy. They are accompanied, at my best guess, by no more than five dragons, but that is more than enough to counter the few griffons I observed. More disheartening still is knowledge that a second "dragonarmy" exists. I wonder silently if there are not five of these armies, created in some tribute to a forgotten evil. Still, hope survives in a flight of griffons, and I endure.

15 Winter Come 349 AC

I have met the black robed mage. Roughly roused from sleep this morning by armed guards, I was brought before the wizard. As ever, his features were cloaked within his enveloping robes. He gestured with a nod for the guards to place me in a chair, then bade them leave in a soft whispery voice.

The room sat in silence for long moments whilst I wondered at his purpose. Just as my resolve weakened, as I was about to beg mercy against an unknown fate, the mage pulled from his robes – with a delicate hand – my journal. This very journal I write in now.

His question was direct: "What do you know of these Dragon Orbs?" I stammered, not from ignorance, though in truth I am largely ignorant of these artifacts. I hesitated, not in fear of the

discovery of my hidden journal, nor was I any longer intimidated by the color of his robes. His hand, so pale and thin...his words spoken in perfect elvish. I stumbled in my response because my inquisitor was a dark elf.

The threat of torture, of pain, of the evil he would visit upon me should I fail to cooperate was never spoken, nor did it need be. I answered his soft questions quickly, all the while in fear of the atrocities of which this elf was capable. I daresay he learned nothing pertinent, for I knew but little–the Speaker is guardian of a Dragon Orb, the orbs allowed elvenkind to end the Third Dragon War, that I knew nothing of Lorac Caladon's plan. At length he again grew silent.

Without ceremony, he returned my journal and bade me return to my duties.

16 Winter Come 349 AC

In accordance with tradition, I will not repeat the dark elf's name, nor allow it to be written down, but it seems he is to be a presence in my life for some time, as he has requisitioned me as his personal assistant. As such I will call him the Dark One. He chuckles to hear me say it, but is accepting.

The Dark One has transferred his service to a contingent of the Blue Dragonarmy (my premonitions were correct, there are five) bound for Palanthas. In interrogation, the Dark One may be merciful, almost elven, but in casual conversation he is most evil at heart, for when I supposed that we would both find it grievous to be so far from home, he remarked, "Silvanesti is destroyed, a land of nightmares now."

At the time I was merely disgusted at his rotten candor, but as the day wore on, overheard conversations and newly arrived captives revealed the truth of his words. I know not what foul magic has destroyed my homeland, but I would not be surprised to find the Dark One and the other foul wizards of the dragonarmies at fault.

30 Winter Come 349 AC

We arrived in Neraka. This "great city" is little more than a fortress surrounded by tents and hovels populated by the basest members of the lesser races. In that, the Dark One and I agree.

As we approached the city–we traveled apart from the column, for the most part–we came upon a group of elf slaves and their captors, a mixed group of goblins and humans lead by an ogre. For entertainment, the thugs were forcing some of the elf men–with their hands and legs still chained–to chase scorpions as they skittered across the hillside. It was apparent one captive had been stung several times, as he could barely stand, and it looked as another had succumbed to his wounds as he lay motionless apart from the rest.

I entreated the Dark One to put an end to this, but his dark heart shown through: his only remark was, "At least they aren't using children." This enraged me for some time.

I vow never to speak to him again.

2 Winter Night 350 AC

It seems I was pre-emptive in my vow. I cannot be certain, but I am more than sure, that the Dark One is yet possessed of some basic elven kindness, as when I woke this morning I recognized some younger of the elves from yesterday's scene in servitude about the fortress. Previously this was a position held exclusively by goblins. I have no misconceptions that their lives are in any way renewed, but surely their lot is elevated some, for the masters of the fortress are concerned with waging war, not petty sadism.

He did not respond when I posed the question to him, but his change in posture alone spoke volumes–it seems there is some bit of elf left beneath those black robes.

3 Winter Night 350 AC

In haste we have left Neraka. I do not know the details, but I gather the Dark One had an altercation in Neraka that he seeks to avoid.

I asked him again how he could travel so far from the lands he once called home. His curt replied left no room for argument. To him, the war in Silvanesti is over, but the war in Solamnia is just begun, and where there is war, there is power to be gained. He would not be specific on his plans, but we travel first to Jelek, afterwhich I can only assume we will rejoin the Blue Dragonarmy in its assault on Kalaman.

It is fair to say I am no longer treated as a slave, though I do not doubt I will find myself again in chains if I attempt escape.

10 Winter Night 350 AC

Today we arrived in Jelek. We had a run-in with some draconians. Apparently, they despise elves as much as elves despise them. The Dark One was injured defending us both during one of our assailant's death throes.

The event was worth little note; resentment for elvenkind in this area is common. It was after the guard arrived and ended the dispute that the noteworthy event took place. The Dark One pointed out that I had missed the perfect opportunity to escape.

I can only reason that I instinctively knew I could not survive in this country without the black robe's help, but I cannot shake the fear I felt during the fight, both for myself and my captor.

13 Winter Night 350 AC

We travel south from Jelek. He doesn't indicate where we are bound, but I have discerned it is not Kalaman. He says only, "The invasion will wait." I suspect we are bound for Sanction.

28 Winter Night 350 AC

Sanction holds more draconians that humans. As a result, I join my companion in traveling cloaked and hooded at all times.

He grows ever more silent, however. These unfriendly confines find us in close quarters on a regular basis, and often I hear his private musings. He mutters archaic elven proverbs. Qualinesti proverbs, no less, regarding the importance of purpose, the fight against complacency, and the quest for self-actualization.

The land, these people…him. More than ever, I long for home.

28 Winter Deep 350 AC

A full month without a journal entry. I suppose I have taken solace in my companion's presence.

We traveled from Sanction to the shores of Qwermish, and from there we skirted the Dargaard Mountains and entered the lands of Lemish. These lands have not been touched by the dragonarmies, but my companion says the invasion is imminent. He hesitates when we speak on such matters. Not, I think, from any moral issue; he has no more love for these scattered communities of low humans than they have for us, but rather his pauses seem to indicate that his presence here is part of the "invasion."

He speaks often of these lands and the inhabitants, how they are rife with ruins of ancient strongholds of nations and empires long forgotten by these short-lived humans. And

he has revealed the true purpose of his interest in me. I can read, somewhat haltingly, Old Ergothian.

What his specific plans are he will not say, but he has hinted at some secret Ergothian Sorcerers took with them when their empire collapsed. He called it his *ainaaista*, his divine quest.

13 Spring Dawning 350 AC

These two weeks have been spent in various keeps and holdfasts of Lemish, calling upon the local baron lords for guest-rights. My companion is well funded, and these petty lords are eager to please a representative of the dragonarmies.

Each day he has me pouring over tomes and scrolls of these long dead holds, searching, but for what I know not. He says to find reference to a place called Ulgurmere, a stronghold from the days before the Third Dragon War, but these dusty tomes offer little on ancient geography.

24 Spring Dawning 350 AC

I have found it at last. I pen this even before informing him of Ulgurmere's location. The reference is of one Baron Otho Ulgur, "…whose castel leis nord of Aym in teh Oesten range."

I admit I am excited, if somewhat hesitant. The tome makes reference to the dark mages who have taken residence there, driving away the local populace – there is every indication they were not even of the Order of High Sorcery.

Addendum

He was most pleased at the discovery. For the first time his hood fell away. No horrid scars or evil visage greeted me – he was simply an elf.

We travel immediately to Castle Ulgurmere.

27 Spring Dawning 350 AC

The castle is a ruin, though surprisingly sound of structure for such an ancient place. One wall lies in rubble, but the main keep stands strong–even much of the woodwork remains in place.

My companion toured the grounds of the place with me this afternoon, and then together we traveled to a nearby village. There he informed me that my service was at an end.

On the morrow, he said, he would return to the ruin to claim his *ainaaista*, and he recommends I not be anywhere near this place come tomorrow eve. With a chuckle, he warned me away from the entire north for the next year or so.

Needless to say, I was shocked. True, I have grown to feel a kinship with this dark elf, but I did not dare to hope his soul was possessed of such mercy. I took a risk then, and proposed to him he come with me, rather than to his ruin, to leave behind his life of darkness, for surely in the chaos of this war a single elf could re-enter society unnoticed, even welcomed for his magic. His mood darkened then, as I feared it might. Tersely he wondered aloud why he would heed the advice of an elf that could not even speak his name.

I knew then he was right. Even should he sneak his way back into society, his elf-ness had been taken from him.

28 Spring Dawning 350 AC

Unbeknownst to my companion, he remains my companion. I know not if it is from a sense of pity, or trepidation at being alone, but I followed him on his return to the castle. He took up residence in one of the towers; I can see his light. I found a place in the lower bailey with few windows; it looks to have been a barracks.

29 Spring Dawning 350 AC

I dared not enter the tower for fear of alerting him, but after midday I was able to observe his movements about the castle baileys and courtyards. I was witness to some powerful workings of magic, as he summoned an army of creatures to do his bidding: earth elementals to move and smooth the earth, air elementals to cart of rubble and ruined roofs, a cadre of fire-bearded dwarf-men to rebuild. And imps–imps he sent out one by one as messengers to unknown places. By day's end, the place looked less a ruin and more an unkempt keep. I wonder what purpose the dragonarmy has for this place…

30 Spring Dawning 350 AC

No sign of him today. I dare not venture into the tower, and there was no sign of light from his window.

31 Spring Dawning 350 AC

I chanced to enter the tower today, but a guardian of earth with eyes the color of bright amethyst barred the door. Surely it reported my presence to the mage, but he has not found me hiding in the barracks.

1 Spring Rain 350 AC

When I woke, he stood there over me. His hood was drawn back; he looked fatigued, but nothing more. He spoke simply, "You are free to stay, but know this: if you do not leave now, you will not later be able to leave." Then he turned, and drawing up his hood, returned to his tower.

And here I sit on the wall overlooking the rear courtyard, pondering my own fate. Today, again he has summoned elementals to do his bidding: two great earth elementals dig from the rear courtyard into the mountain wall. I can only guess that he digs for his *ainaaista*.

2 Spring Rain 350 AC

I have decided to stay. We supped together last eve; he was as couched as ever about his purposes here, but his eyes held a spark that said soon it would be a secret no more. Tomorrow he said, it will be a dark night, he said. Solinari and Lunitari will both be new, and Nuitari full.

5 Spring Rain 350 AC

And so it was. Two nights past I learned his dark secret. He kept silent vigil, alone in the middle tower throughout the day. The elemental stood guard as it had before, and I was not allowed to pass. Long after night fell, the clouds cleared and the stars shining, he came for me, and we the spiral stairs of his tower.

He asked me why I keep this journal, who did I hope would read it. I told him that it was for me that I wrote–to help me remember my home, myself. At this he quoted a Speaker of long ago, "Are we defined by our surroundings? The family that raises us, the lords that lead us, the forests that keep us? No. An elf is defined in his heart, his love of the things that surround him."

I was startled that he would speak thus. It became clear to me that though the elven race had abandoned him, he had not abandoned the elven race. I ventured then to ask him his story, why he had been cast out, and I again I was startled at his response, which I record as faithfully as I know how. He said,

"Love, Falyrn. For love I was branded a dark elf. When I traveled to take my test of sorcery, I stayed a night in the human village of Solace, and there I met and fell in love with a human girl."

Here he chuckled.

"I can see by your expression, Falyrn, that you do not approve, so I will spare you the details. And I am forbidden to discuss the test of High Sorcery, so I will say only this: those who survive the test are offered a glimpse of their life with gods of magic, that the user might pledge himself into one's service.

"From Nuitari I saw power unimaginable. From Solinari I saw fame, the respect of my peers, and a high position in House Mystic. From Lunitari, I saw the love of that girl: she and I living together for all our years. For love, I chose the red moon. For that, I was banished."

He fell silent then, withdrawn back into his robes. Cautiously I reminded him his robes were black.

"When you stand before the Council of the Book of House Mystic, with your new human wife, wearing robes the color of new-blossomed roses they do not hesitate to banish you, Falyrn. And when they banish you, it is immediate, without warning, to threats of violence and worse, the longer you linger.

"From the heart of Silvanesti to the Khurish city of Pashin, we made our way without benefit of coin or cloak. No elven village would aid us, for word had gone forth. In the desert there is no respite from the sun, and we met no travelers to give us aid. My wife died of exposure on the sands.

"When love is lost, and respect is no more, what is left for me, but power?"

With that we entered to tower's windowless solar. I beheld a raised platform on which stood two pillars about half the height of an elf. I could not tell if this structure was part of the original castle or a new addition so finely had he refurbished this chamber. Atop each pillar sat a globe, a sphere so dark it drank in the light.

Without fanfare or hesitation, he stepped onto the platform, and placing his hands one on each globe, it began: subtle at first, like a charge of horses heard over a hill, but rising in strength and intensity to shake the walls, then louder, as though the very earth was being rent. Then silence. Long silence.

I stood in ignorance, wondering when the spell would be complete, and he stood unwavering atop the platform, eyes closed in concentration. At long last he spoke,

"This, Falyrn–this is power!"

I looked around the room, my ignorance shown plain. He chuckled then, a refreshing sound, and bade me come with him to the courtyard. I looked out over the broken wall, and where once there had been a rolling hill down into a stand of trees, there sat now clouds.

This mage, this elf, had ripped the castle from the earth. His name was Trythian.

Gunthar's War Journal

Kayolin's Involvement in the War of the Lance

"This document, while seemingly unimportant, includes the exploits of our dwarven allies from Kayolin. I believe that without their exploits that the war effort would have been in vain. Time, I fear, will erase the importance of the dwarves' actions.
The actions of these courageous dwarves saved thousands of lives and provided the resources for the counter attack. Without the Kayolin dwarves, many refugees would have been caught in the open and killed by the advancing dragonarmies. Let these pages be a testament to those fallen heroes who have been forgotten by the triumph of our armies."
–Lord Gunthar uth Wistan

The War of the Lance affected the nations of Ansalon deeply and in different ways. While some of these nations' actions have been well publicized by several sources, other nations' contributions have been missed. The Kayolin, a realm of dwarves, is one of those nations that played a key part in the conflict, but in the closing days of the war was not considered a major player.

The Fall of Throtl

From the early days of the war, rumors were heard throughout Kayolin of the dragonarmies. While most of the dwarves living there dismissed the rumors, a few ventured out to discover the truth. These dwarves traveled to the city of Throtl and discovered that the city had fallen to evil forces.

Many of these dwarves tried to organize a resistance movement in which they hoped to harass the dragonarmy forces. This movement had some success at first but was betrayed by a human mercenary named Turc Yolton. The dwarves learning of the betrayal fled from the area and returned home. The Governor, Erann Flowstone, soon heard their stories.

Flowstone understood the plight that the people of Throtl and Lemish faced, and so he ordered the Kayolin borders opened. The dwarves would allow humans to settle in lands behind the gates to provide protection. Humans from both of these lands fled to this realm seeking shelter.

The Fall of Solanthus

As the area behind the Dual Gates filled with refugees, Flowstone learned of the dragonarmies' next conquest, the Solmanic city of Solanthus. Flowstone believed that if the Solaanic city fell, then his realm would be in danger. Fearing this threat, Flowstone organized the armies of Kayolin and had the force on the move when word came of Solanthus' fall. Disheartened by the loss, Flowstone ordered his men to break into small groups and help the refugees reach safety.

These small groups reached many of the refugees and provided them with much needed supplies and protection. They led the refugees into the dwarven kingdom and Flowstone himself oversaw their settlement. The refugees were amazed by the dwarven hospitality; many of them volunteered to join the dwarven war effort.

As the dragonarmies continued to extend across Solamnia, the dwarves of Kayolin attempted to slow them at every corner. Flowstone knew from early on that his army would be no match if they were forced to fight a large-scale battle against the might of the dragonarmies. Instead he devised hit and run tactics that incorporated human cavalry units to attack the enemy's supply lines. It was by using these tactics that his troops severed the supply lines in several places.

Battle of Iron Pass

In 353 AC in the closing days of the war, Kayolin fought in a major battle in the defense of the mountain realm. In the country of Lemish an aurak draconian named Tolc Lenog schemed to create his own nation. Believing that the dwarven realm held fabulous riches he believed that a sneak attack would find the dwarves unprepared. Lenog marched his forces from the south towards Southgate in hopes of discovering it unguarded.

Flowstone learned of the enemy movement and was worried about the possible attack. Many of his forces had joined the Knights of Solamnia on the field and would be unable to return to defend the realm. The dwarven generals deemed the area of Iron Pass as the best area to defend south of Southgate. Flowstone ordered the army to march to the pass and prepare to hold it.

The human refugees living behind the gates heard of the pending attack and wished to offer their assistance. Their leader, a young Solamnic noble named Lord Thomas Helgaard, offered to lead a cavalry that could help protect the dwarven flanks. Flowstone quickly agreed and the cavalry under Helgaard traveled to Iron Pass.

Lenog launched his attack early in the morning by using goblin-mounted wolves to probe the enemy lines. Believing that the left flank was the dwarves' weakest area of defense, Lenog launched a heavy infantry attack at the left flank while feinting to the right flank with a small force of hobgoblins. Unknown to Lenog, the left flank had been disguised to appear open but was in truth well supported by entrenched troops. As the two lines crashed into one another, it became clear that the flank was going to create a stalemate.

The draconian attempted to counter the attack by sending his cavalry to sweep further left in the hopes of getting around the flank. Flowstone had already sensed his opponent's action and had positioned the human cavalry there. The order from Flowstone was to engage the enemy and then feint a retreat. The hopes were that a successful feint would allow the defenders to believe they had routed the cavalry. Flowstone was hoping that the enemy would take the bait and pursue the fleeing units. Already positioned were several dwarven crossbowmen protected by several score of heavy infantry. If the feint were successful, the goblin cavalry would be routed.

Flowstone watched as the enemy force attacked the cavalry and was pleased to see the pursuit of the goblins. As they crested a hill, he saw the dwarven crossbowmen launch volley after volley. The few goblins that reached the crossbowmen were quickly cut down. This force now moved forward, as Lenog believed that his cavalry had successfully routed the enemy moved another unit of draconians towards the hill. The two forces meant at the top of the hill and a mighty struggle continued.

The dwarves were outnumbered by the draconian attackers and began to give ground to the attackers. A great horn sounded from behind the dwarves as Lord Helgaard led his troops in support of Kayolin. The humans entered the fray and turned the tide of battle. Unable to continue his attack, Lenog was forced to withdraw and retreat.

As the army of Lenog withdrew they discovered another obstacle. A small wing of silver dragons had been told of the fight and had come to join. Seeing the fleeing army of Lenog they blocked his only avenue of retreat. The army, then seeing no escape, fled in every direction; Lenog himself was killed in the chaos that enrsued.

This battle, while little known, prevented the creation of a draconic empire in the southern parts of Solamnia. Following the conflict, the dwarves continued to patrol the area and drive out small pockets of the remaining forces. The battle also further cemented the relationship between the dwarves of Kayolin and their Solamnic neighbors.

Conclusion of the War

In the few weeks following the war, several of the refugees remained in Kayolin. There they hoped to return to farming in the dwarven valleys that have been offered to them. These farmers and the dwarves continue to hope that the goodwill that the two races experienced during the War of the Lance will prosper for generations.

The True & Faithful Account of Lord Toede's Campaign

It is with distinct pleasure that my close friend and lord, Toede, requested the use of my literary skills and faithful accounting to scribe our most recent campaigns. My hope is that with this diary, all previous false accounts of my lord will be expunged and that his true greatness (and mine) will be recognised across the new empire of the Dragonarmies. The below entries are factual and true as witnessed through my own eyes. This is but a glimpse into two brilliant minds, and the full thirty-seven volumes will soon be in print by the Toedaic Press and available in the Library of Palanthas.
--Groag, Highlord's Aide

Spring, 351 AC

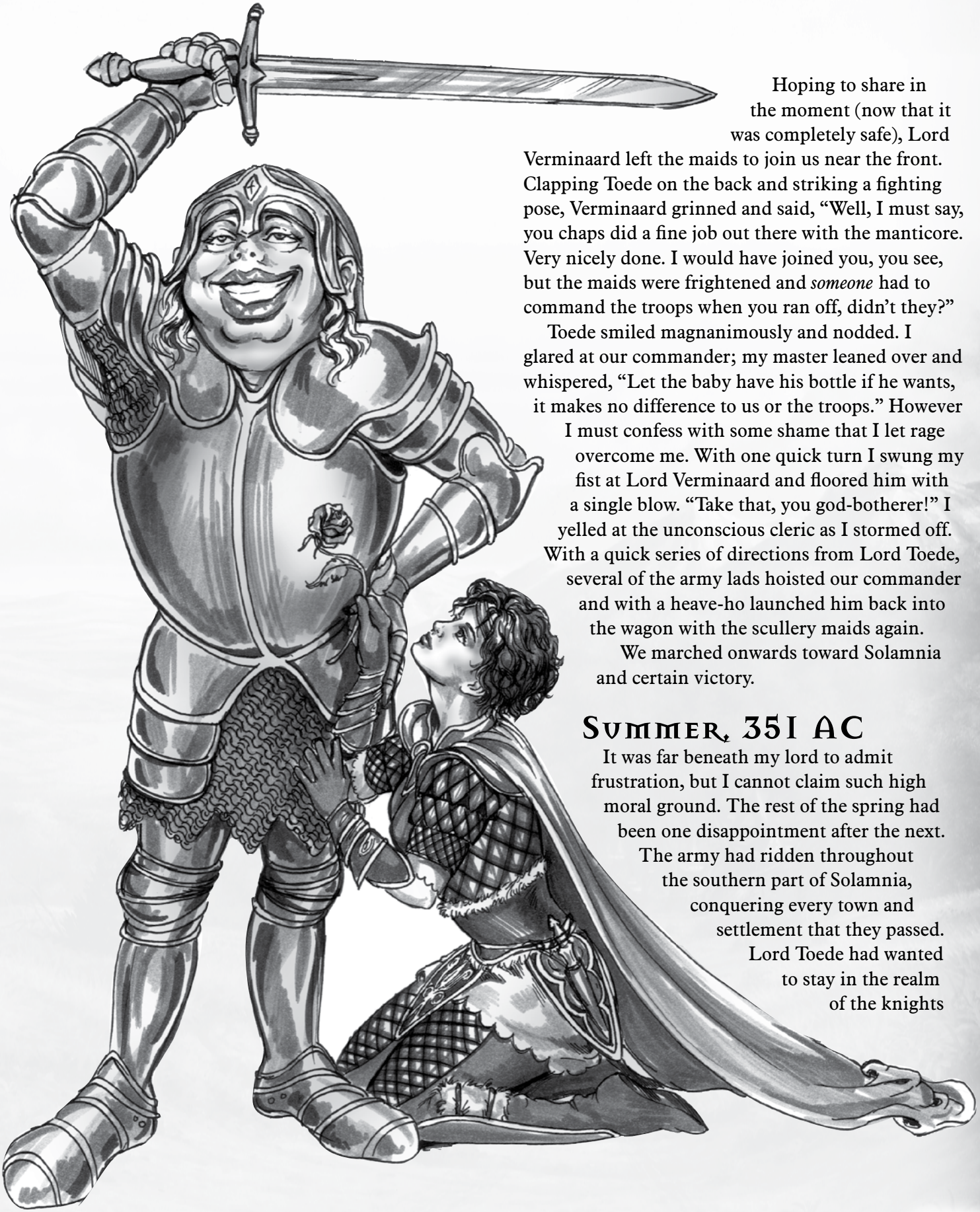
It was a day like any other. My lord and I were riding at the head of the Red Dragonarmy, whilst our itinerant nitwit of a commander resided in a wagon with the scullery maids at the army's rear, cowering and whining about the possibility of an impending attack. Of course, one could debate that he definitely belonged in the rear. But such gutter talk was beneath my master and myself.

The army had already passed through the goblin lands of Throt, which is where my master and I joined. And it had also passed through Lemish, who had the foresight to ally with us, after my master raised a single eyebrow at them. We were now travelling through the lands of Estwilde, a rugged place fit for the bravest of warriors, like the two hobs who were fast riding through it. The land was home to a number of wild beasts and monsters, not the least of which was the manticore. One such beast hovered a short distance northwards of the head of the army. A girlish scream erupted from the rear of the army, which meant either one of the scullery maids or Lord Verminaard had also seen the beast.

Lord Toede raised a hand, and a hush fell over the entire army. "My friends stay here whilst I deal with the beast. It should not trifle me overlong, and I expect to be back within a short while to enjoy another fine march with you. Tally ho!" With that, mighty Toede sauntered off towards the manticore, with my good self in tow. For anywhere my lord tread, I surely followed…except the bathroom, because that would simply be awkward and uncomfortable for both of us. The pair of us rode at breakneck speed towards the foul beast, which was the biggest manticore we had ever seen. I would be remiss if I didn't add that it was also the only manticore we had ever seen. The beast tossed its mane and rolled its eyes at what it possibly thought were two foolish warriors rushing headlong towards death. How little the beast knew!

The manticore swung its tail towards us and unleashed a barrage of needles to pierce our bodies. However I leapt clear from my horse to avoid the needles, carelessly forgetting my dear horse Daisy. My master had much more foresight though. Raising his tower shield, he charged into the heart of the barrage of needles, diverting them from the horses and himself. One needle managed to skim over the top of the shield, and cut a scratch upon his cheek. A single drop of blood fell from his cheek that day, and I'm certain the entire army gasped from a mile away.

My lord grimly smiled at the manticore as he touched his cheek. "That will be the only blood you shed this day, other than your own." The beast roared at Toede and prepared to pounce, as I walked behind the beast, which had forgotten me in its rage. With a war cry, I cut downward with my broadsword, keenly slicing through its tail. The manticore gave a pained cry and tried to turn to lash out at me. However, my master then drove his sword into its torso. The beast shuddered and collapsed onto the ground, dying a quick death. The pair of us sheathed our swords and rode back to the army, receiving the usual adulation from our troops.



Hoping to share in the moment (now that it was completely safe), Lord Verminaard left the maids to join us near the front. Clapping Toede on the back and striking a fighting pose, Verminaard grinned and said, "Well, I must say, you chaps did a fine job out there with the manticore. Very nicely done. I would have joined you, you see, but the maids were frightened and *someone* had to command the troops when you ran off, didn't they?"

Toede smiled magnanimously and nodded. I glared at our commander; my master leaned over and whispered, "Let the baby have his bottle if he wants, it makes no difference to us or the troops." However I must confess with some shame that I let rage overcome me. With one quick turn I swung my fist at Lord Verminaard and floored him with a single blow. "Take that, you god-botherer!" I yelled at the unconscious cleric as I stormed off. With a quick series of directions from Lord Toede, several of the army lads hoisted our commander and with a heave-ho launched him back into the wagon with the scullery maids again.

We marched onwards toward Solamnia and certain victory.

Summer, 351 AC

It was far beneath my lord to admit frustration, but I cannot claim such high moral ground. The rest of the spring had been one disappointment after the next. The army had ridden throughout the southern part of Solamnia, conquering every town and settlement that they passed. Lord Toede had wanted to stay in the realm of the knights

and crush all possible resistance, by launching attacks on Palanthas and the remaining Solamnic strongholds. Verminaard strongly opposed the idea, insisting that we head southwards into the realm of Abanasinia. He had publicly promoted Toede to the rank of Fewmaster, which supposedly meant he was a group commander and chief advisor to Highlord Verminaard. All the lads rolled their eyes at God-Botherer's (as we now all called him) proclamation, given that Toede was the true commander of the Red Dragonarmy anyway. In normal circumstances, we would all have simply ignored the blithering idiot and advanced throughout Solamnia with Toede, however Verminaard called on the one useful card in his moronic deck. He called for Takhisis.

Our wondrous Dark Queen appeared out of nowhere, looking every bit the lusty mistress. She rolled her eyes at Verminaard and sighed, "Oh what is it now Verminaard, can't a goddess have a moment's peace without you nattering away?"

Verminaard prostrated himself on the ground. "My Dark Queen, I beseech you to convince this army to march southwards into Abanasinia for the greater…."

Takhisis perked up and squealed with delight, "Ooh, is that my beautiful Toede over there!" The goddess sauntered over to Lord Toede and sat in his lap smiling at him, whilst Verminaard continued to lie on the ground mumbling to his goddess. "Oh shut up, Vermy, I'm really getting tired of your clap-trap, one of these days I'll just simply ignore your whining if you don't ease up."

Turning to smile sweetly at Toede, Takhisis batted her eyelashes and began. "So Toedy-kins, what's news? It's nice to see you're serving under my banner and that your dashing aide Groag is still with you. Now what was the bonehead going on about?"

I perked up at being complimented by a goddess and gave her my best worshipful look, whilst my lord prepared to defend his case about going to war against the rest of Solamnia. "Well you see, my lads and I were all up for crushing those dastardly Knights of Solamnia in your name, but God-bother… I mean Verminaard wanted to head southwards to find other true clerics and holy artifacts or some such. Now I'm all for treasure hunting, but come on, we have a war to win. A war to win for you, in fact!"

Takhisis smiled serenely at Toede's words. "Now my pet, I know your heart is in the right place. Truly I do. But in this case, Vermy is right. The army really must head southwards, as there are portents of a wondrous holy artifact that must be acquired, or it could prove a threat to my armies. I agree that the Solamnics will be destroyed, but all in good time. Right now the priority is to head towards Abanasinia. With a champion such as you at the helm in the south, I trust nothing can possibly go wrong."

My lord sighed and nodded his head in defeat. "Of course, my queen, I am always your servant and will abide by your greater wisdom."

The Dark Queen cooed and gave Toede a kiss on the head. "Now don't get all down and depressed. Give me a big smile before I head off, muffin-toast." With another smile at Toede, Takhisis departed suddenly.

As Verminaard picked himself up off the ground, looking awfully proud, Lord Toede then turned to the army. "Right then lads, our goddess has graced us with her presence and for those who couldn't quite hear in the back, it seems that we are needed post-haste in Abanasinia to find some holy gear and to protect it for Her. Prepare to move out!"

Throughout the rest of the summer, the Red Dragonarmy made it safely across the New Sea to Abanasinia due in no small part to the tactical troop maneouvers engineered by Toede and myself, his trusty aide. We reached the ruined city of Xak Tsaroth, where a black dragon by the name of Khisanth soon met us. Much like our previous encounter with the manticore, Verminaard ran away shrieking to the rear of our troops at the sight of the dragon. From somewhere to the rear came a disgusted sounding voice. "Oh cripes, I think God-Botherer's gone and soiled himself."

With yet another of his now infamous deep sighs, my master (with myself in tow) approached Khisanth and gave a deep bow. Taking his full measure of the monstrous black dragon before him, Toede respectfully began, "Greetings to you, great Khisanth. Our Dark Queen has not done you justice in

espousing your size and majesty, nor the sheen of your obsidian scales. The Red Dragonarmy prostrates itself before you and offers its aid in occupying this realm."

The powerful black dragon snorted slightly and inclined its head to the brave hobgoblin. "I assume you must be the fearless Lord Toede that our Mistress speaks of, and beside you is the equally fearless warrior Groag. And I assume the squealing bed-wetter at the back is Highlord Verminaard?" This last query was followed by the spitting of acid onto the flagstones beneath the great wyrm. The dragon gave a toothy grin and continued, "No matter. You are most welcome here bold one, as are your troops. There is little to oppose us in this place, but conversing with someone who doesn't wet themselves at every opportunity is always a pleasant distraction."

Toede chuckled at the last statement, as did I, before responding, "Alas, would that I could stay and bask in your magnificence longer. Duty calls me further inland to Abanasinia. I will leave several squadrons of our troops here, but we must move on." With this last statement, he bowed again to the dragon.

Khisanth gave the army a final glance before retreating back down a nearby well. Her voice echoed from the depths, "Just make sure that you take the incontinent human with you."

Once more the Red Dragonarmy continued through Abanasinia (minus a few squadrons), finally stopping at the ancient citadel of Pax Tharkas. Toede and I ensured the fortifications were adequate and defensible, before proclaiming the site was worthy to serve as the headquarters for the army. Toede allowed Verminaard to serve as the nominal lord in name of the fortress, whilst we set about planning the conquest of Abanasinia and far more important duties. The summer gave way to autumn, as many of our plans came to fruition.

Autumn, 351 AC

By autumn, Toede and I had created a series of task forces, made up chiefly of draconians who searched the lands of Abanasinia, looking for true clerics and divine artifacts. Not one to let others do his work for him, my master often rode in patrols himself, allowing God-Botherer to hide away behind the walls of Pax Tharkas. On the return from one such patrol, he told the tale of a bunch of idiot-savant adventurers. "A half-elf, a dwarf and a kender tried to stop a patrol led by yours truly. It almost sounds like a bad joke really, and they were even heading towards a bar! We roughed them up a bit and sent them packing. I don't know…the refuse they allow into cities in this region is just horrendous."

My own ingenuity, coupled with that of my lord, led to the complete capture and domination of the town of Solace, as well as that of several other towns and settlements throughout Abanasinia. Our resident Highlord continued his great campaign of complacence and inadequacy within the walls of the fortress that we claimed. When our goddess sent a red dragon known as Ember to aid Verminaard, the Highlord seemed to grow the slightest of backbones and started even trying to give orders to my master! Ember told Lord Toede and I in confidence that Takhisis had sent him to actually watch Verminaard rather than to serve him. The dragon also acknowledged my master as the true leader of the Red Dragonarmy, and pledged to serve him until the end of its days. Toede gave Ember a friendly pat and told him that he was honored that such a big powerful dragon would want to serve him, but that the red was needed to keep a complete moron like God-Botherer in line. Sadly, Ember agreed completely (both that God-Botherer was a moron and that he was needed in Pax Tharkas).

Not long after, Toede was recognised for his brilliance by Ariakas himself, the ruler of all the Dragonarmies. Believing that with Ember to watch Verminaard, the army could cope with the loss of Toede, he specifically requested Lord Toede take over as Highmaster in the Black Dragonarmy, and become the governor of the town of Flotsam. My master and I were only too happy to take our leave of the Highlord Incompetent (we had tired of calling him God-Botherer), and migrate to Flotsam for the greater glory of the empire. Clearly we were really needed there.

To tell the truth, we were not as needed as we thought in Flotsam. There were no real enemies to fight, but we did get a crash course in how to effectively tax your citizens and diplomacy through the use of a big stick. However Lord Toede and I did enjoy what we viewed as a nice vacation from the bothers of the road. It was also interesting to note that only a month after we left, we received news that the Highlord Incompetent had managed to go and get himself killed. Whilst that in itself was highly entertaining news that could only benefit the empire, I was sad to hear that Ember had been taken down by some random heroes as well. The poor dragon was probably trapped in the wide ranging net of stupidity that sprung from God-Botherer's enormous ego.

It was only weeks after this news had reached Flotsam that another arrival came in the form of Ariakas. Whereas Verminaard had plumbed the depths of idiocy, Ariakas had only dipped his toe in the stupid pool. The supreme ruler of the Dragonarmies had at least some foresight and recognised the greatness of my master. He prostrated himself before Lord Toede in my master's court and begged him to take control once more of the Red Dragonarmy, following the death of Verminaard. For the briefest of moments, I could see my master debate the possibility, before he casually dismissed the idea. "Well you see, not that I wouldn't want to… but surely it would look better for the troops if someone else took the reins. Been there, done that…and well it's old hat, really. I'm sure if you think about it hard enough you can think of a more suitable candidate for the role. Someone…close to home, as it were."

Ariakas scratched his head and stared at my master with the glazed over look of someone who's sniffed a bit too much of the old tarbean tea, if you get my drift. Then his eyes lit up with the hint of activity in his cranium and he started once more. Having failed to persuade Lord Toede to take the reins of the Red Dragonarmy, it was then that Ariakas turned to my good self. "Master Groag, you are a strategist and tactician with few equals. Could I beg of you to command the Red Dragonarmy and carry it to victory in the name of the Dark Queen?"

Not that I didn't appreciate his enthusiasm and trust in not only my master, but also in myself. To have the self-styled Dragon Emperor ask one to be a general of his armies is a good boost to the ego… even if said Dragon Emperor has the intellectual might of a gnat.

"No, no, my good man. Whilst I'm flattered, truly I am. It just wouldn't be right. See Lord Toede and I are a team, a symbiotic unit of sorts, if you will. Why if I left, it would be like a kender without a topknot, or a gully dwarf without fleas. It just wouldn't be right."

At these words, Ariakas slumped and looked defeated. And I must say, both myself and Lord Toede just felt terrible that our dear bumbling colleague couldn't reach the conclusion that we were guiding him towards. So my master felt the need to spell it out for him.

"Ari, old chum. Look this is your moment to shine. We've had our time in the sun, and it's been grand. But right now, Groag and I just want a wee bit of a vacation and enjoy some kickbacks right here in Flotsam. We've been talking about this for a little while, and we think that *you* should command the Red Dragonarmy yourself. You've got it in you. So chin up, march out and command that army. Get to it, soldier!"

Now whilst this was far from the grandest speech my lord had ever made, Ariakas did indeed get that old sparkle back in his eye. He then puffed out his chest, saluted Lord Toede and myself, and with a cheeky grin the little boffin marched out into the sun to command his army.

Toede then turned to me and sighed. "You realise that in a few months, the twit will have buggered up the army and when everything is a right royal mess, we'll need to go fix everything up again, right?"

Winter, 351/Spring 352 AC

As winter set in around Flotsam, a missive arrived from Neraka for Lord Toede. The letter from Ariakas advised that another of his Dragon Highlords had been killed, a dark elf by the name of Feal-Thas who had commanded the White Dragonarmy. The message implored that Toede was the only individual that Ariakas had at his disposal who could possibly take on

the task, as even Ariakas himself was busy running the Red Dragonarmy. Toede finally acquiesced to take the reins of power, but sent a note back to Ariakas telling him that he would only be the Highlord of the White Dragonarmy on a temporary basis until someone else came along. He reinforced once more that he enjoyed being governor of Flotsam, and really enjoyed taking a backseat, and let others take the glory.

So it was, that in the winter months between 351 and 352 AC, Lord Toede, myself, and several of our key staff took charge of the White Dragonarmy, which they led to Throtl. It was near Throtl that a huge ogre by the name of Kadagh claimed that he should serve as the Highlord of the White Dragonarmy. Thinking he could bully my lord, he began a tirade, attempting to goad my lord into battle. However my lord is simply above such things. Lord Toede simply advised Kadagh that he was in the role for a short period, and that the great blustering buffoon was welcome to it after that point. Kadagh took offence at some such thing that my master had said and charged. I leapt to my lord's defence, but he waved me down with an all-knowing smile on his face. Judging the ogre's charge, he flexed one muscular arm and with a quick sweep, knocked Kadagh's legs from under him. He then flipped the stunned ogre over onto his belly and soundly gave him a good spanking, right there on the battlefield. After the thousand or so nearby troops stopped laughing, a red-faced Kadagh stomped back to his Green Wing in silence.

In these cold months, the Blue Lady, Kitiara Uth Matar, visited Toede, as she had apparently long been infatuated with him, a fact unbeknownst to all, including my lord. As the pair waited for their approaching foes, the Whitestone forces, they spent many nights together. Eventually Kitiara was called away to another battlefield, leaving my lord and swearing to return him as soon as possible. In her place, she left one of her generals to command the Blue Wing, Highmaster Bakaris. Both Bakaris and Kadagh wisely deferred to my lord Toede on all battle tactics, something that possibly saved the Dragonarmy forces at Vingaard from total annihilation.

However even the greatest tactical minds could not save our forces from the horrid Solamnic butchers. Neither Toede nor myself were present at Vingaard Fortress when the forces of the Golden General struck, and the Whitestone armies destroyed the feeble attempts of Bakaris to hold them at bay. Hearing of the losses, I ordered Kadagh to send several green dragons to waylay our enemies. Toede appreciated my initiative, especially when it paid dividends and caused massive casualties amongst our foes and promptly threw a raging party to celebrate. In hindsight, throwing a huge party when one is right in the middle of a major conflict is not the best tactical move. The Whitestone forces headed towards Throtl to find a huge and very hungover army. It was not our finest hour.

Whilst all our lads really wanted was a nice lie down to sleep off the alcohol, those fiends lay waste to our forces. In spite of being terrible unwell, Toede and I gathered a small group of our troops and held off hundreds, if not thousands of the enemy at a pass leading into the Dargaard Heights. As the last of our comrades reached safety, our small band called for a parley with the enemy leader. The Golden General herself came to the fore of her army and agreed to converse with Lord Toede. The pair had a private chat, and as Takhisis is my witness, I noticed the elf maiden check out my lord on more than one occasion. Clearly using his charms, Lord Toede had managed to get the elf maid to agree to allow our brave band to leave in peace, with the promise that we would not trouble their forces any further.

With a bow and a blown kiss from Toede, our band left toward Flotsam and more peaceful ventures. It is with some degree of relief that we now find ourselves back at home and again in need of some excitement. One of the lads recently told me of a fabulous trail out in the woods that would be excellent for a hunting trip. With danger safely behind us, my lord and I are planning a sojourn out into the woods later today. With such a well-planned trip underway on such a beautiful day, what could possibly go wrong?

Music

In these dangerous and uncertain times, the only music that might come to mind is the beating of the war drums or perhaps the pounding of our own hearts. But music, whether it is a light-hearted ditty sung in a tree-top inn or a love song filled with hope and longing, can transport us to a different place. Songs can speak to us in ways that transcend language. Here then, are songs that may speak to you.

Caramon Majere

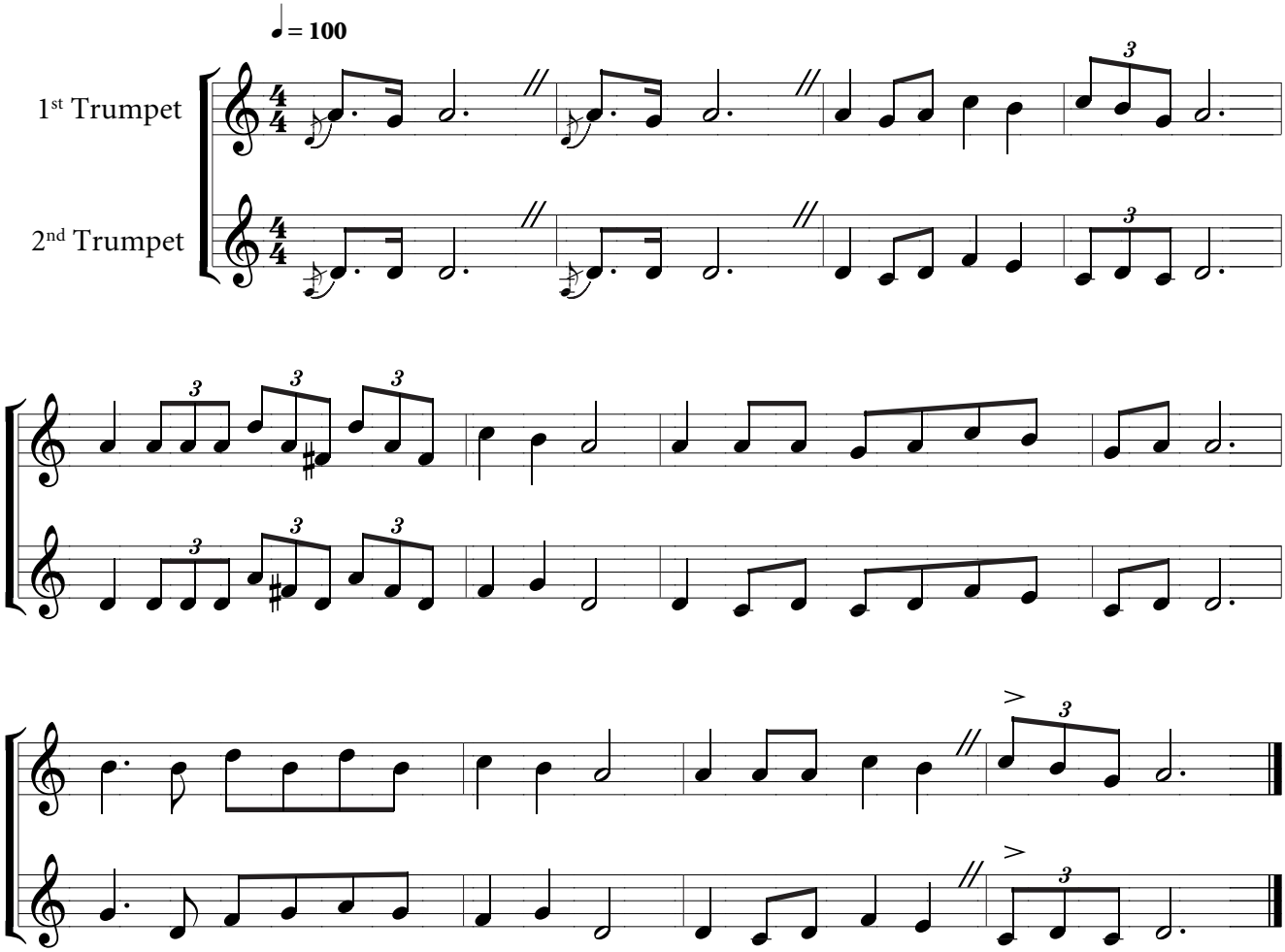
Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Fanfare for Derek Crownguard

Solamnic Knight Derek Crownguard was born with an excess of ambition and self-confidence. He envisioned himself as one day becoming leader of all the Knights of Solamnia. In anticipation of his rise to power, Crownguard hired the famous Solamnic musician, Frederick Francis Shallowford, to compose an illustrious fanfare for him. It is said that Crownguard's main requirement was that this fanfare must be more illustrious than that of his rival to power: Lord Gunthar Ust Wistan. Shallowford delivered a stirring composition that could be played, in whole or in part, on the battlefield or could be repeated over and over, as many times as needed, to cover the lengthy formal processionals that are common at court.

Some legends claim the first four measures of this fanfare sounded to announce Derek Crownguard as he rode onto the battlefield to lead over a thousand men during the siege of the High Clerist Tower. Others claim the first and only time this tune was performed was at Derek's funeral, which occurred not long after the battle.

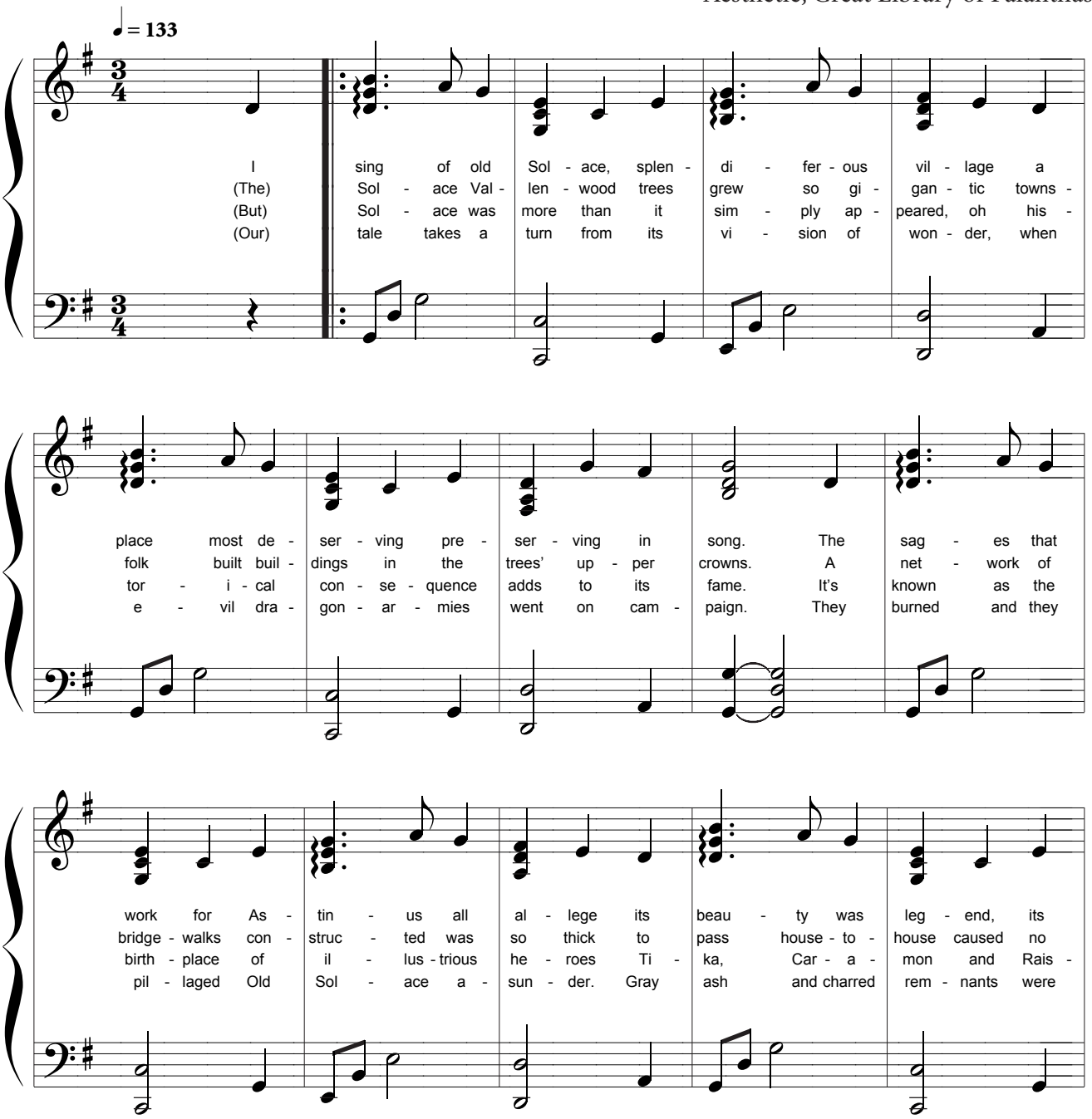
Music cataloged by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas



Old Solace

This traditional Ergothian harp melody has been set to a number of different lyrics over the years. The present lyrics, "Old Solace," were written by former resident John Aelwreth to celebrate his beloved village in all its glory. Aelwreth lived in Solace until it was burned to the ground by evil Dragonarmies during the War of the Lance.

Music cataloged by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas



his - tor - y strong. The shi - re of Sol - ace sprung up at a
need to touch ground. All vis - it - ing trav' - lers found ac - com - mo -
tlin are their names. Nine cham - pi - ons to - ge - ther set out from
all that re - mained. Old Sol - ace our mem' - ries will not let thee

cross - roads near Khar - o - lis Mount - ains and Cry - stal - mir Lake. Trav' -
da - tion in most fam - ous lodg - ings: Inn of the Last Home. A
old Sol - ace to fight to give free - dom from evil a chance. Flint,
per - ish or tar - nish the glo - ry that's right - ful - ly yours. Now

lers who passed through were all wel - comed and showed the most in - ven - tive
whole town of build - ings in lof - ty lo - ca - tions you'll not find its
Tas - sle - hof, Riv - er - wind, Gold - moon, and Tan - is with Sturm Bright - blade
bat - tered and bro - ken your old form we'll cher - ish and songs of your

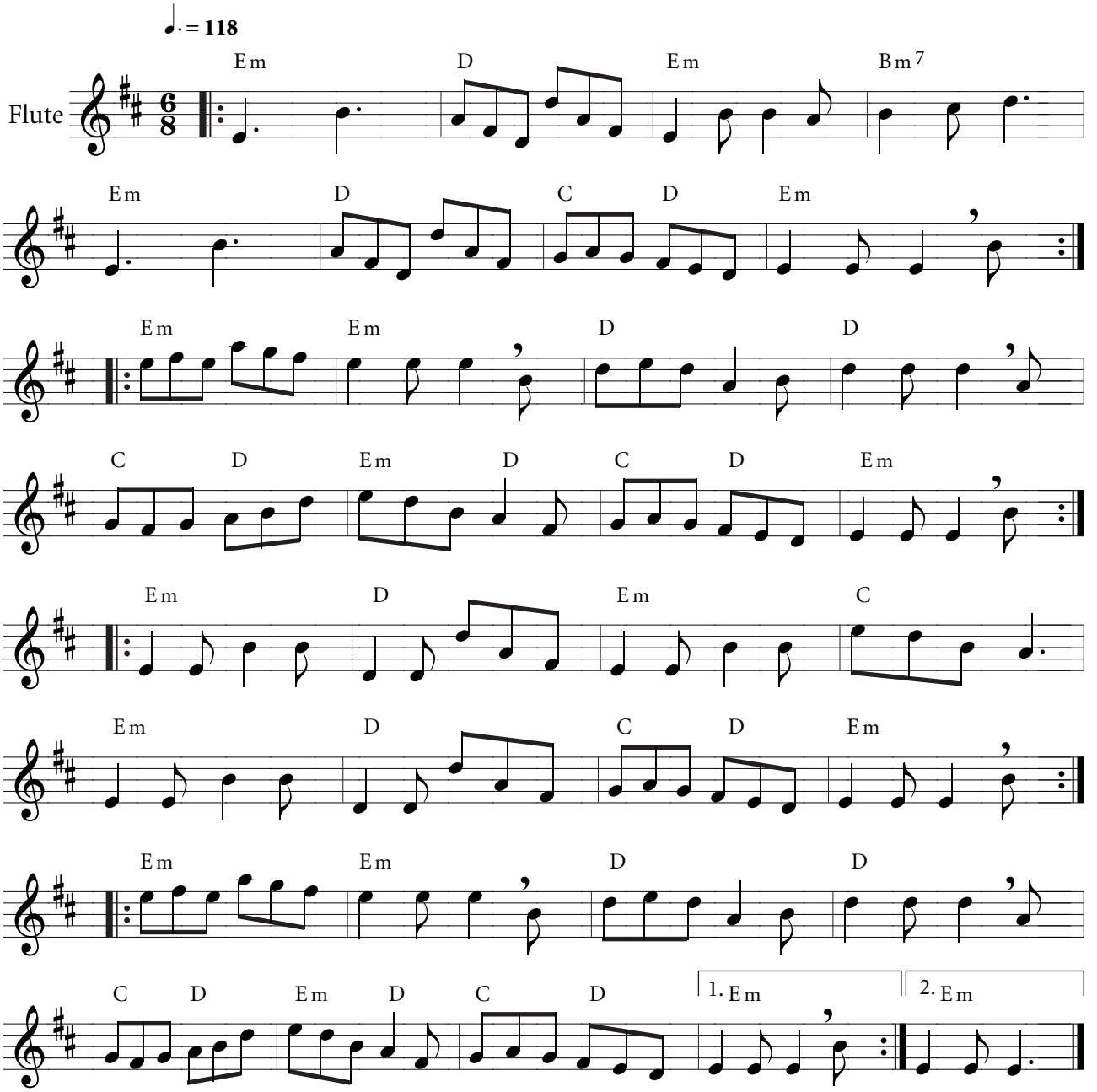
1, 2, 3. 4.

vil - lage that Krynn - folk could make. (2.) The
e - qual where - ev - er you roam. (3.) But
fought in the War of the Lance. (4.) Our
great - ness your leg - end in - sures.

The Road to Foghaven Vale

This song gets its name from the actual road to Foghaven Vale which lies within the hills of Ergoth and leads to the tomb of Huma, ancient hero of Solamnia. Before the Cataclysm, the road provided a pleasant passage for many pilgrims. This ancient Ergothian dance tune, with its upbeat tempo, captures the excitement of that journey. It is traditionally played on wooden flute with guitar accompaniment.

Music cataloged by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas

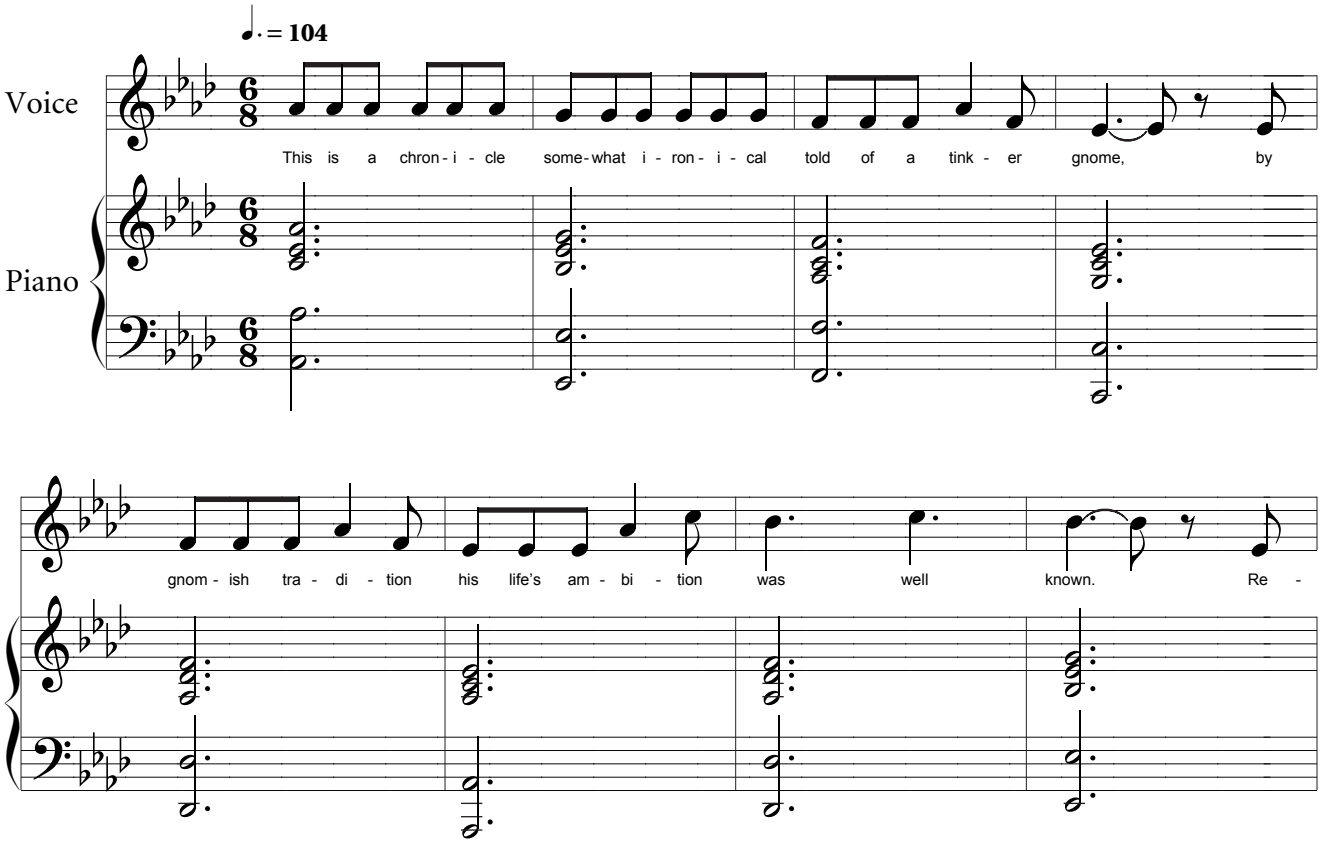


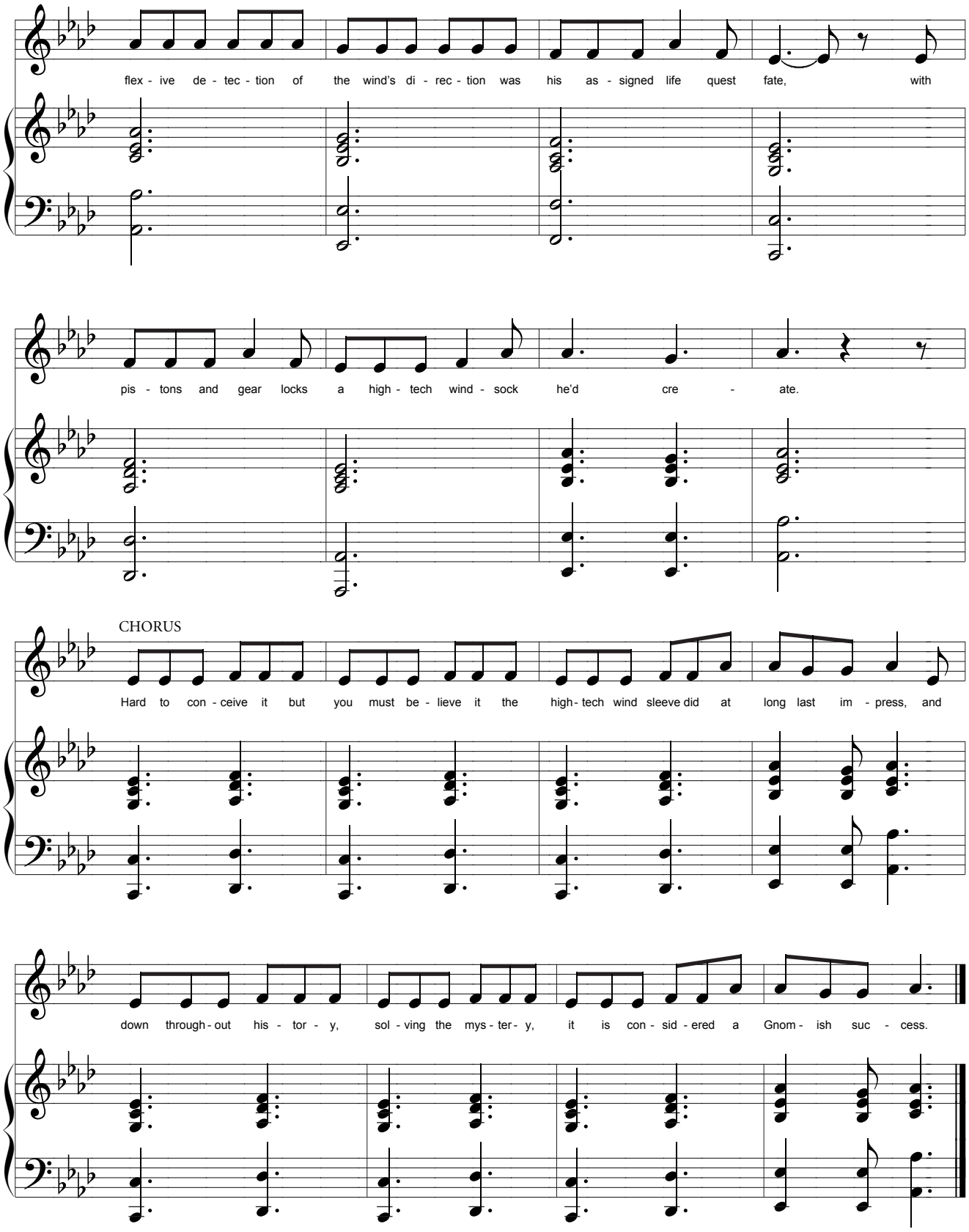
The Gnome Song

Most musicians simply call this "The Gnome Song." The original title began "Ode to the Illustrious Invention of Our Famous Gnomish Ancestor, GellanWindodius HydraulimerFatherOfGlamnusPaintrific… (8 pages of genealogy omitted)…." This song was meant to be a commemorative tune, praising a mechanical wind-detection device that was invented several years before the Cataclysm. Unfortunately, it took the Gnomes so long to research their ancestral line that, once they got the title out of committee, they ended up hiring a human bard to write the actual music and lyrics. The result is a fast paced patter song in 6/8 time that isn't quite as complementary to their ancestor as the Gnomes had hoped. (And they've formed a new committee to study what to do about that.)

Like most patter songs, *The Gnome Song* is characterized by a rather fast rhythmic beat where each syllable of text corresponds to one note. The song relies on four tongue-twisting verses filled with alliterative words and rhyming vowel sounds. Thus, to best showcase the song, it helps if the singer has excellent enunciation! In fact, performers of *The Gnome Song* are often challenged by their audience to sing the final chorus a second time through, as quickly as possible, with the crowd listening carefully for slip-ups. Although, the musical accompaniment has been kept intentionally light to emphasize the text, experienced musicians may detect a very recognizable chord progression hidden in the bass line.

Music cataloged by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas




flex - ive de - tec - tion of the wind's di - rec - tion was his as - signed life quest fate, with
pis - tons and gear locks a high - tech wind - sock he'd cre - ate.
CHORUS
Hard to con - ceive it but you must be - lieve it the high - tech wind sleeve did at long last im - press, and
down through - out his - tor - y, sol - ving the mys - ter - y, it is con - sid - ered a Gnom - ish suc - cess.

Lyrics to The Gnome Song

Verse 1:
This is a chronicle somewhat ironical told of a tinker gnome,
By gnomish tradition his life's ambition was well known.
Reflexive detection of the wind's direction was his assigned life quest fate
With pistons and gear locks a high-tech windsock he'd create.

Chorus:
Hard to conceive it but you must believe it
The high-tech wind sleeve did at long last impress.
And down throughout history, solving the mystery,
It is considered a Gnomish success.

Verse 2:
He worked acquiring methods of firing water turned into steam,
To power mechanical gears, quite gigantical was its scheme.
But after all this there was something amiss it's a fact no one could deny
The wind sleeve was sizable and ill-advisable weight to fly.

CHORUS

Verse 3:
He spent time thinking, mathematically tinkering 'til he had grown quite old,
Until inspirational and revelational thoughts unfold.
A dual-piston chamber with oil enflamed there would lift the sleeve high indeed,
To reach to the sky, where wind sleeve would fly and would succeed.

CHORUS

Verse 4:
It's worth re-mentioning now that invention that gave the wind sleeve success,
The dual-pistoned chamber given the name hydraulic press.
Though some cast aspersions at complexer versions and think that this gnome's a dunce.
No one can deny that the wind sleeve did fly…exactly once.

CHORUS

Songs from
Autumn Twilight

Qualinesti Hymn

The Road Eternal
Thalasi elevas
Guides (all) home
Ki valinost
May the stars shine your way home
Quenta solari nen heth y thon
Exile's end
Valthonis eth
Winter's close
Plenisharei
Spring blossoms
Qualiareth
Bringing breath to me.
Shareia

Hymn to Takhisis

(with Nerakese translations for the draconians)

Hail to the Queen of Darkness
Sambut ke Permaisuri itu punya Kegelapan
Majesty of the Abyss
Kemuliaan punya Abis itu
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
Sambut Takhisis, kesetiaan untuk anda
I pledge eternally
Saya jaminan kekal

Hail to our Dark Majesty
Sambut ke kita kemuliaan gelap
Most supreme authority
Kebanyakan pihak berkuasa tertinggi
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
Sambut Takhisis, kesetiaan untuk anda
I pledge eternally
Saya jaminan kekal

Hail to the dragon goddess:
Sambut ke naga itu dewi
Beautiful, mighty, ruthless
Cantik, kuat, kejam
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
Sambut Takhisis, kesetiaan untuk anda
I pledge eternally
Saya jaminan kekal

Hail to the portal that stands
Sambut ke itu portal itu pendirian
Bending the world to her hands
Mengoyak dunia ke dia tangan
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
Sambut Takhisis, kesetiaan untuk anda
I pledge eternally
Saya jaminan kekal

Hail to the battles we win
Sambut ke itu pertempuran kita menang
Spreading her power through Krynn
Kesebaran dia kuasa melalui Krynn
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
Sambut Takhisis, kesetiaan untuk anda
I pledge eternally
Saya jaminan kekal

Hymn for Laurana

Now sleep,
Our oldest friend,
Lulls in trees,
And calls
Us in.
Shalost,
Mersala quisali,
Odowath quadi,
Huwe yen
Uadelas.

The age,
The thousand lives
Of men and their stories
Go to their graves.
Uanyetha,
Kithcopequa heltithas
Anthopas tal astini
Mori-thonas tsalarian

But we,
The people of the long
In poem and glory
Fade from the song
Uadeth,
Nesti thonas
Quenta ayani kithanawas
Malosha astari.

Funeral Song for a Solamnic Knight

(with Solamnic Translation)

Return this man to Huma's breast
Pas ath mardath ila sena Huma
Beyond the wild, impartial skies;
Maram-ara badi, tanaith phalac;
Grant to him a warrior's rest
Coni ila mardos a taras rahath
And set the last spark of his eyes
Ai rakh acor sharas oc mard absac
Free from the smothering clouds of wars
Muth min dam-guutnath thordal oc ras
Upon the torches of the stars.
Ba mashalai oc salabeth.
Let the last surge of his breath
Phir acor harcast oc mard thorom
Take refuge in the cradling air
Ainam panah dar tsaram thoreth
Above the dreams of ravens where
Bas khalat oc khaar mahal
Only the hawk remembers death.
Acal ucarath silat cadavac.
Then let his shade to Huma rise
Phiras mard ruh ila Huma arral
Beyond the wild, impartial skies.
Maram-ara badi, tanaith phalac.

Song of Darkenwood

(with Sylvan translation)

Onto Moonbeam lightened path
Er gul ayst jant ny sgilley cassan
Stray from there you must not do
Sharynah vey shen shu shegin ny gow
Enter quiet darken wood
Entreil fey durey keyl
with respect and cautiousness
Lesh arrym as arredis

Strange creature lurking-place within
Frangah cretor boal keiltunis choisti
You must not trifle with them
Shu shegin ny traifyl lesh ad
Do not take to the darken woods carelessly
Nah dy gol gys ny durey keljin demerioshah
Best instead you stay out
Fare ayns imid shu tannee moy

Battle Song of the Solamnic Knighthood

(with Solamnic translation)

Into combat ride triumphant
Dar ras ruc intisaras
Loyal knights of Paladine
Afinas kharam oc Paladine
Heed the call of battle trumpet
Tahud palam oc ras-anafil
Oath and Measure you define
Aelas ai Tatus anta alvar
Shout the name Vinas Solamnus
Awas ismac Vinas Solamnus
Come with lance and sword and shield
Uras ham mocmalus ai pax ai darga
Smite the evil foe before us
Uwas takh yagi silatas-ai
Fight 'til death and never yield.
Tarum biham cadav ai sinhas aslam.

Hail! the Solamnic knighthood
Oma! Solamni parankhar
Hail! the courageous heroes
Oma! kannai mardas
Hail! Hail! All Ansalon
Oma! Oma! nafai Ansalon
The Knights of Paladine
Kharam oc Paladine
Hail! the Solamnic knighthood
Oma! Solamni parankhar
Hail! the courageous heroes
Oma! kannai mardas
Hail! Hail! All Ansalon
Oma! Oma! nafai Ansalon
Whom honor doth define.
Minas sularus ust alvar.

When evil dragon hordes surround you
Uct takh draco urdos mahalas anta
Care not what the odds define
Nafnagai urdos amkaan alvar
Fight like Huma, stand your ground
Tarum muta Huma, kara ma madan
Fight in the name of Paladine.
Tarum dar ismac oc Paladine.

Crown Knight loyal to Habbakuk
Barus Kharas afinus ila Habbakuk
Sword Knights of Kiri-Jolith
Pax Kharam oc Kiri-Jolith
Rose Knights who are wise and just
Ras Kharam min akelos ai adelos
Look: what the Measure doth bequeath!
Ocul urdos Tatus ust ahi!

Hail! the Solamnic knighthood
Oma! Solamni parankhar
Hail! the courageous heroes
Oma! kannai mardas
Hail! Hail! All Ansalon
Oma! Oma! nafai Ansalon
The Knights of Paladine
Kharam oc Paladine
Hail! the Solamnic knighthood
Oma! Solamni parankhar
Hail! the courageous heroes
Oma! kannai mardas
Hail! Hail! All Ansalon
Oma! Oma! nafai Ansalon
Whom honor doth define.
Minas sularus ust alvar.

A Wedding Gift

from Sir Occo of Solamnia

True devotion, Lauralanthalasa,
an elf-child's troth to someone long ago--
the soul of perseverance, Tanthalas.

Nor elf, nor human, outcaste in both houses,
to spare you shame, he freed you from your vow,
in true devotion, Lauralanthalasa.

Though she could not forswear her own heart's promise,
she would not bind you with old words once spoke--
o' soul of perseverance, Tanthalas.

She followed you, your quest, and came to lead us as
our Golden General, against every foe
to true devotion—Lauralanthalasa!

And your own path, Est Sularus oth Mithas,
has found your heart's match here, Knight of the Rose,
thou soul of perseverance, Tanthalas.

We none can see the ends to which life calls us,
yet if we trust, our hearts already know,
by true devotion, Lauralanthalasa,
by soul of perseverance, Tanthalas.

Organizations

Most people feel a need to share a part of their lives with others with similar interests. Craftsmen join guilds to protect their trade and exchange their secrets. Religious sects share the mysteries of their faith. Kender congregate on the side of the road to trade items and maps and exchange the latest news.

In this section you will learn of the bardic college of Ergoth, the wolf warriors in service to the Dark Queen, kender knights, cursed dragons, and elven wildrunners.

Whether we join a fellowship of warriors or a strange secret society, we should all find a place we belong.

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

A Kirath Wildrunner

Extracts from the Journal of Saralorn, Found in the forest of Silvanesti, 382 AC.

"I will keep my senses ever alert, taking in all and committing it to memory so that the Silvanesti may be well served, and their return made easier. I am the eyes and ears of the Silvanesti. My presence declares the return of the Silvanesti to their rightful homes."
—Code of the Kirath

3rd Winternight, 351

Even in winter, the forest glades are sunny and bright in Silvanesti. Trees that are old even to our long-lived race remain green, year round; the aspen and the oak so beloved of our people wave gently in quiet breezes. All that seems a dream now. Now snow falls… now the blue sky has been replaced with never-ending, gray, boiling storm clouds. The green trees ruined, tortured.

We are volunteers; we chose to go back into the Nightmare. We have no idea what caused this, this desecration of our home. One minute standing in a leafy grove, the next watching it twist into some horrible mockery of what it once was. We only know we must reach our people. We are the *Kirath'algos*—the Vanguard of Hope. We fight back the evil that comes from within the borders of Silvanesti itself. The mission for my company is to head toward Silvanost; we hope that somehow the some of the people of our capital have been spared. The alternative is too terrible to comprehend.

One of our number, Sithenal, our eagle-eyed scout, spotted griffon riders heading west. We can only hope that some of the Royal Family has escaped. But Sithenal is dead now. They all are. I am on my own now. My company, my companions, my friends—dead.

The hardest loss was Bereleth, my brother. He and I, we were always together, as close as twins. If it weren't for him, I would never have become Kirath. I remember playing with him as children in the aspen groves almost a century ago, playing war, slaughtering imaginary ogres with sticks, while our parents disapprovingly looked on. "Fennic," he called me, after the wild Fennic foxes. For my hair is red, unusual for the Silvanesti.

Today hideous beasts attacked us. Beasts we once would have called forest friends, warped and twisted by some evil power, emerging through a noxious green fog to bellow and claw and bite at us. Driven mad by their torture, deformed, hungering only for our flesh to sustain their unholy existence. They could smell our fear. But we are Kirath. We fought. We fought and lost. My companions, my brethren, fell one by one, torn apart by those who we once cared for as stewards of the forest. At last only my brother and I stood, bloody and battered amidst the corpses. We did not need to speak, because our instincts knew what to do, we turned and ran.

We ran through the forest, almost unrecognizable compared to the slender and beautiful trees we had watched grow since they were saplings. The trees wept blood instead of sap, the branches tore at our clothes, the wind screaming and howling through the branches. Every footfall landed in dank and sticky earth. We ran for hours. Until a giant contorted tree lurched into motion on our left. Its tall, twisted, tortured trunk moved, a branch aimed for my head. I rolled right, barely missing a step as I dodged away from the monstrosity. I heard it rip its very roots from the ground, but poor Bereleth did not. He tripped and fell, landed in the moist black soil of our home. Too late I heard him scream. "Sarlorn! Fennic!" and I turned only in time to see the pursuing nightmares fall on him, rending flesh from bone. I only hope his light faded quickly. I only hope E'li has taken him to a better place…

I sat paralyzed as they feasted. The grisly scene transfixed my limbs, and they refused to move. One of the beasts looked up, sniffing the air with what used to be some sort of nose, and looked at me. Its eyes were red, glowing like bright coals in a fire.

I ran. I run still. I am Kirath.

"I travel light. If my skills are sharp, my senses are keen, and my courage unfailing, then I have all the equipment I need. I am truthful whenever possible, for it is difficult for the deceitful to see through falsehoods."
—Code of the Kirath

7th Winternight, 351

We Kirath are provided with all the tools we need to do our job well. We are taught from a young age to use our minds as well as our bodies, to watch for changes in nature that may give clues to the passing of others. We can recognize many secret marks, and some of us have even learnt to speak the language of the forest beasts, to use them in order to help us with our quest. We have a code that binds us together; we can adjust, adapt and improvise to any situation.

We are lightly armored, to allow speed, agility, and grace. We have the Greenmask to protect us from the noxious fumes that now fill our home, the Atrakha flute to imitate the birdcalls of the forest and to keep in contact over vast distance, the ritual cloaks that protect us from fire or help us to blend with the woodlands, but most important is the Soris. The Soris is a symbol of the Kirath. A jointed staff-spear, two pieces of darkwood connected by a universal joint. The short upper shaft has small folding hooks and a rope hand-loop. The lower shaft has an attached leather thong and is tipped with a sharp metal spike. The ball-like joint can be locked in any position, allowing for many possible uses in the forest, both weapon and tool. The Soris has saved the life of many of us and is our most precious possession.

Today I had need of my Soris to defend myself. That itself is unusual. We are not the warriors of House Protector. We travel fast and light, we are the eyes and ears of the Silvanesti people, we report back, and do not engage in bloodshed unnecessarily. But today I had to fight. Fight against creatures of which my darkest dreams could never have conjured. As I traveled through the forest, ever onward toward Silvanost, the aberrations of nature and corrupted forms continued to assail me from all sides. I could not find the roads, and traveled through the deep and thick forest, at times so twisted and dark I did not know if it were night or day. I dreamed of my brother, repeating the image of his death in my mind so often I felt like I would go mad.

I came upon a clearing, where a beast awaited. Perhaps it used to be a wolf, but I really couldn't tell. Its form writhed and tentacles sprung from its mighty shoulders, and its legs seemed to be little more than misshapen claws, its mouth split into mandibles like some giant insect. It would almost have been pitiful, were it not so deadly. It leapt at me, its foul breath making me gag as I dodged to the side, my Soris leaving a trail of black blood down its rubbery hide. The slimy blood hit the ground, fizzing and popping when it hit the earth. This creature was truly otherworldly.

It turned and snarled, bearing its huge teeth at me, circling me slowly, and testing my resolve. I in turn circled slowly, pointing my Soris straight down its drooling maw. It lost its patience and leapt through the air toward me, landing on me bodily, impaling itself on the Soris. My other hand held its throat as its jaws snapped and gnashed close to my face, its tentacles and claws pounding and raking my arms, my body, my legs. Its weight crushed me into the earth. I saw stars in front of my eyes. I felt searing pain in my hands as its black blood fizzed and popped down the darkwood shaft of my spear. I had a choice: live or die.

I chose to live. I pushed it harder now, through skin and bone and tissue, until the melting tip of my Soris breached its back.

The creature whimpered and collapsed on top of me. My hands were burnt and blistered from its corrosive fluids. The wood of my Soris is now destroyed, useless. My armor was torn and ripped by its powerful claws. I rolled it from where it lay on top of me, feeling the air fill my lungs as the crushing weight was removed. And for the first time, I felt the rays of the sun pierce the boiling clouds. It was a moment of beauty, an oasis of calm in a sea of darkness. I was filled with hope, and for the first time in weeks, my fear vanished.

I'm only a few days from Silvanost now. The tangled paths seem clearer ahead.

I ran on. I run still. I am Kirath.

"I pledge my energy to the reclamation, restoration, and preservation of nature. Animals, plants, water, or any other aspect of nature, are to be used wisely, not wasted. Never solve a problem by violence when stealth and strategy can yield a better solution."
—Code of the Kirath

9th Winternight, 351.

I reached the city at midday. I've never felt so tired. My limbs ached. But at least I was nearing home. At least I would meet the survivors, to help them defeat and rebuild whatever had destroyed our land. The elven people would laugh and cry and reclaim our land; we would slowly but surely tend to our garden and make it beautiful once more.

I arrived at the gates with a heart full of hope. The gates of Silvanost are gates woven of the finest gold and silver and steel. Something within me died when I saw them. Broken, blackened, open to the world and revealing the carnage and wreckage that was once beauty and elegance. The living dwellings of the Silvanesti people were torn and broken and dead, shadows flitting between the buildings, darker creatures hiding from anything that resembled light. I collapsed to my knees, finding tears when I thought I had no more in my body. I clutched at the earth, moaning and then screaming, screaming until I had no more breath, until I was hoarse and had coughed up my last meal.

Then I saw the elves. An army of elven soldiers walking straight and true, down the avenue from the gate toward me. I was so tired, so full of hope that I rasped out a joyful cry and began to crawl my broken body toward them. And hope once more brought me to my downfall as I got closer. These warriors were elves no longer, for no life shone from their eyes. Their skin was rotting flesh, the cold of the grave flowing from their forms, their clothing torn, their armor and weapons still sharp and menacing, washed with the same green unholy mist that flowed across the murky earth. These creatures were once my kin, but now they served some other dread master.

The leader of these phantoms, these spectral mockeries of my people wore a mask. A Greenmask like my own. My heart leapt into my throat. This poor elf was once Kirath. The army of elves stopped at the gate, but this lone mockery of life walked out toward me. In its hand was a Soris, the staff-spear of our kind. In sheer despair I realized that I had nothing left to lose and nowhere else to go.

"So be it," I said. As my Soris was lost, I drew my sword, a fine elven longsword with which I had dispatched countless foes, and charged the creature as it advanced. I was on it in moments, aiming a slash that should have taken its mockery of a head from its shoulders.

It was brutally quick, unbelievably agile. I had expected a corpse to be slower. Its fighting style was remembered from life, its training similar to mine. I swung and it parried with the fine darkwood of its Soris. I thrust at its midriff and it dodged to the side. It feinted to the left, and I read its movements, bringing my blade around to slash at it, only to find it had moved beyond my reach. This evil creature was an excellent fighter, and we were even on all terms except one. It did not tire. It just kept coming, while I began to slow, began to be beaten back, and had to become more and more defensive as our two weapons danced in a blur in between us. I was losing. I slipped sideways on the wet ground, scrabbling over the ground as I tried to regain balance.

The tip of its Soris found my skin. The blade pierced clean through my unarmored upper arm and caused a spray of blood that splattered gore across the mask covering its face. I screamed, wrenched myself forward, and pulled myself further down the spear, my hands unconsciously finding the mask it wore. I pulled with all my might and felt it give. I was looking directly into the red eyes of the dead warrior, and straight into the ruined face of my brother. My dear brother, Bereleth.

The entire forest seemed to stop. The hideous realization lasted an eternity.

The lips I knew so well cracked open and a gurgling moan came from deep within its form, "Fennic…join…me…join…us all." He pulled the blade from my arm, a moment of agony that brought me back to my senses. I scrabbled backwards, crab-like, as it—as he—slowly advanced forwards toward me….

I ran. Ran until my vision blurred. I ran until my heart pumped like it would burst from my chest. I ran until my muscles refused to go any further. And all the time I could hear his soft sibilant whisper through the forest, "…my brother…," I heard his voice calling for me. I still hear it now, even as I write these words.

The code of the Kirath says, "I am first and foremost an observer. I serve to report the obstacles, not engage them. Dead kirath give no information." Today I will break that vow.

For now I write in this journal for the last time, and I can only hope that there are some of us left, some of us who will fight, some of us who will find this journal and learn from my tale. Use it to break this darkness. My tale is over. He hunts me now. And from him, I cannot run. I hear his footfalls on the earth. I hear his voice in my head, "Fennic…come…"

He is coming for me.

I will not run anymore. I go to meet my brother. We are Kirath.

The Knights of Balif

In the years following the Rose Rebellion, the kender of Hylo became enamored with the idea of the Solamnic knighthood. Warriors dressed in bright shiny armor that could wield glittering swords in battle with the efficiency of a hoopak and could perform all sorts of neat tricks from the back of a moving horse were all the rage. The medals, the feasts, the festivals, the jousting, the waving flags–it was like those knights lived in one big kendermoot day in and day out for their whole lives! The fact that these knights had long ago rebelled against Ergoth, a nation that had really not been very friendly to Hylo in the past, only made the reputation of this growing Knighthood even more appealing. So for decades, generations of kender made the trip to Solamnia to join the Knighthood. Each one was turned down for one reason or another. Either they were too short, or they were not born in Solamnia, or they weren't allowed to play with the valuable ancient weapons, or any other number of "silly" reasons. Most kender eventually returned home at one time or another with the sad story of their rejection from the Knighthood.

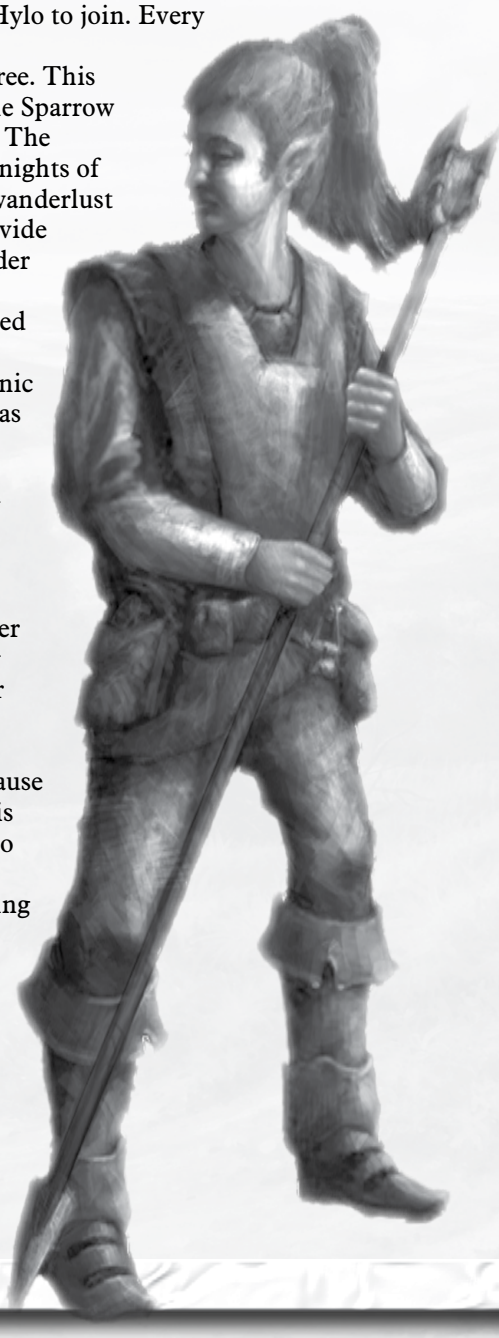
In 1634 PC, after his fifth attempt and eventual failure to join the Knights of Solamnia, Huma Springfingers decided to form his own knighthood. He named his knightly order the Knights of Balif in honor of the first and greatest kender hero. As news of the Knights of Balif spread, kender from all over Kenderhome flocked to Hylo to join. Every kender who could serve was allowed to join.

They created three orders. The Order of the Acorn was the highest and noblest of the three. This order was reserved for Huma and his close friends…and their close friends. The Order of the Sparrow was dedicated to all those kender who were currently on wanderlust or planning to be soon. The Sparrows would fly to the farthest reaches of Krynn doing good works in the name of the Knights of Balif. The third order, the Order of the Pouch, was open to those kender that were beyond wanderlust and chose to remain in a place for longer than a few weeks. It was their responsibility to provide shelter to wandering Sparrows and to assist in collecting supplies or information for the Order of the Acorn. The knight's oath was "Ek'thik allus mot durnat" which means "Goodness is best." They intended to live up to the standards of the Knights of Solamnia that they admired so, even if the Solamnics did have a slight problem with their entrance requirements.

Word of the new warrior regime in Hylo reached the ear of Gregori uth Telan, the Solamnic Grand Master at the time. The Grand Master was unfamiliar with the ways of kender and was outraged at the stories of kender running around with "pots on their heads," waving "sharp pointed sticks," and claiming to be knights. He believed their actions belittled the grand Solamnic Order. So he sent an emissary to request that the kender stop their mockery. They did not stop, however; in fact, they issued an invitation for any knight who was interested to join the Order of the Acorn, a great honor indeed. On this note, however, Grand Master Gregori ordered an invasion of Kenderhome, despite the protests of his advisors.

As the Knights rode into Hylo to lay siege to the citadel at the heart of the city, the kender cheered and waved. The kender never actually realized they were under attack. Instead they prepared for a great festival in honor of the Knights' arrival. For nearly a month, the kender strolled around the Knights' encampment, praising them for their arrival and telling them how much they admired them. Eventually the commander of the invading force was able to explain how the formation of the Knights of Balif had hurt the Grand Master's feelings because the Grand Master thought they were teasing the Knights of Solamnia. The realization of this information shocked the kender and they decided to disband the Knights of Balif in order to prevent any further misunderstandings.

It wasn't until the Chaos War that the idea of kender knights was brought up again. During the time when the Dragon Overlord Malystryx ordered armies of ogres to surround the capital city of Kendermore, the story of the Knights of Balif resurfaced. It is said that the stories of the valiant Knights of Balif gave the kender courage when their own natural fearlessness had begun to fail them. Kender storytellers claim that the kender knightly order was reborn in that terrible tragedy and that some of the kender who helped the populace escape that day wore the symbols of the three Orders. Legends suggest that the Knights of Balif will return some day, in some form or fashion.



Shadow Wars:

Secret Societies, Cults and Clandestine Organizations of Ansalon

The term 'secret society' has a negative connotation to it, but in reality it simply refers to a group that has some form of exclusionary membership and purports to have access to some form of secret knowledge available only to those members. A clandestine group, by comparison, is what people typically think of when they hear the term, 'secret society.' It is a group in which membership is a closely guarded secret, not something publicly proclaimed. The meetings are held in basements and other secret places, and the group's goals and motives are usually suspect. They are typically thought to be subversive, but in fact they are as likely to be beneficial as malevolent.

The dark forces that plague society exist at all its social levels, so clandestine group members feel that in order to keep them in check they must combat them in secret ways. Other clandestine groups are dedicated to social turmoil and strife, seeking instead to sow chaos and dissension. The end result is that these two opposing groups often combat each other under different guises, clashing in a secret war of which average citizens are typically unaware.

In some cases, a guild is a fluid organization, while in others it is a very rigid hierarchy. They are commonly reserved for tradesfolk, such as smiths and merchants, although Palanthas and several other major cities on Ansalon are known for their thieves' guilds. In the past, the priesthoods of Reorx and Shinare, being the patrons of many merchants and tradesfolk, heavily influenced shipping and manufacturing guilds to the point of outright control in some cases. Fraternal or sororal orders are commonly known as "brotherhoods" or "sisterhoods;" these are very similar to guilds, but have more mystical and decadent accoutrements. The groups claim to be more exclusive, but in fact many have rather lax membership requirements.

Morality and Group Motivations

Just because a group is a secret society does not mean it is a malevolent one. These groups usually have very rigid moral codes to govern conduct, and transgressing them invites the harsh wrath of the organization's leaders. The older members of these groups know that they exist because society fears them, but also because they are not so much of a problem that they need to be dealt with. If constant openly illegal and anti-social acts were being committed, the populace would rise against these groups and expel them. The benevolent groups are similarly minded; they know that they exist because they offer benefits to enough people to not be a problem. If they started to assert themselves in realms beyond their appropriate sphere of influence, they too would likely find themselves under society's scrutiny.

One common mistake often made is that of counting cults as secret societies, when this is not true. They share some characteristics with secret societies, but a cult is very much a form of religious devotion, whereas a secret society is a form of association. The duties of a cult member are much more demanding and usually require a commitment of a shared moral code or belief system.

Claims of Antiquity

An important part of any group's reputation is its history. Often, a new group will simply invent a grand history extending back before the Cataclysm, adopting historical figures into its ranks and weaving itself into history, to the point of commissioning false histories and 'ancient' artifacts or artwork depicting their influence down through the ages. In other cases, a group will steal a name from a defunct group of historical note, claiming to be a new or reborn branch. Woe to the group that steals a reputation from a group that later proves to be very much alive and active, and does not appreciate its reputation being sullied by pretenders. This historical posturing ties into the desire on the part of members to be part of a long and proud tradition, especially important among those who are ineligible for the great long-lived orders such as the Knights of Solamnia or the Conclave of Wizards.

Secrecy and its Nature

It is important to understand what is meant by the secrecy these groups are cloaked in. There are two main manifestations of secrecy in these societies. Some keep their very existence and membership secret, which in fact makes them clandestine organizations, while others proclaim themselves openly but keep their internal workings a secret. The former are the

stuff of rumors and shadows, while the latter have meeting halls, rallies, and the like to show their membership to society. Malevolent and benevolent goals can be found among both, as can legal and non-legal methods of achieving those goals.

It is at some point trivial to try to draw strict lines between these groups, because their goals, motivations and methods overlap in many cases.

Membership and its Benefits

Membership in secret societies is very diverse. The members come from all levels of society; the makeup usually determined by the nature, purpose, and origins of the group itself. Within a given group one may find nobles, merchants, tradesman, and peasants, all seeking boons from their fellows.

For some, being part of a group means special business deals, or access to certain clients or other economic advantages. Many people live lives of mediocrity, especially in small towns. Being part of an exclusive society is a way to elevate oneself above one's normal social position, and hence not feel quite so powerless in the world. Priesthoods of Darkness in particular capitalize on this thirst to be different, especially the followers of Chemosh, promising power and prestige in exchange for devotion. This devotion more often than not has a higher price than anticipated, however.

Some people join the groups out of fear, but there are two types of fear. Some people are scared of the group itself, and see protection from it being gained by joining it. Others join the group because they seek protection from outside threats or internal weaknesses by being part of the group. In other cases people join groups for the camaraderie and social aspect. There is nothing sinister to their motivations, they simply wish to associate with men or women of similar skills, ideas or means.

Families play a strong role in some groups, with sons and grandsons being sponsored for membership by other relatives. This family tradition is particularly true among the Knights of Solamnia. Professions also have traditions of being parts of groups, although this is strongly tied to the ideas of economic advantages and mutual aid. In ethnically-based groups, aid and fellowship are the main motivators for joining. New immigrants to an area seek out groups like this, so that they can help each other get established and prosper. There is an understanding, that to accept help is to later give it when called upon.

In some towns, membership in a local secret society is an essential part of becoming an insider in that society. For example, being a member of a certain guild is an unspoken and unwritten requirement to open a business or become a society leader. Having the right membership can allow circumventing of laws, taxes or other social hindrances that people continually seek to avoid. The titles and pseudo-history that are part of secret societies are also an important reason many people have for joining. When one is a member, they are no longer a lowly waiter or wagoneer, they have a title that confers an air of nobility. If a person from the upper echelons of society joins, a person of lesser means may still supplant them and hold authority over them, even though they are subordinate in the "normal world."

Initiation

An essential part of joining a group is the act of initiation. In the prospective members mind, the initiation rite and participation in it is what makes them no longer part of normal society, but part of a special elite. The Wizards' Conclave is a well-known group with an initiation rite that all prospective members would do well to take very seriously–failure to do so almost invariably results in death. As with the Conclave, some groups have magical rituals, but for the most part the act is an assemblage of prestidigitation and showmanship, designed to instill a sense of awe in the new member and symbolize passage from one stage of life into another.

Selected Groups

There are hundreds of groups, small and large, across the physical and chronological span of Ansalon. An attempt to catalogue them all would be an exhausting and dangerous task, as some groups are secret and prefer to remain that way. The list is intended to show only the variety and nature of groups that exist.

Ash Collectors

To most mages, they are purveyors of spellbook inks, chalk for summoning circles, and other components. In truth though, they sell components for darker purposes, for all are made from the ash of the magic-warped lands they frequent. They prowl the battlefields, from Ansalon to Taladas, gathering samples of what they find. They are detectives of a magical bent, gathering the remains of magical minions and samples of the lands they warped. Some members are alchemists, other mages, others are dark priests—all have heard the whispers of power and have answered the call. They collect the ashes for study and for use in foul magicks, all to gain the ability to summon and control the creatures of Chaos. While they have succeeded in the summoning on numerous occasions, their membership has remained small due to their inability to control most of what they unleash. Therefore, they continue their studies, beneath cities, in dark caves and on mountain peaks, in hopes of gathering

minions to further their dark ends. The Ash Collectors have tenuous ties to black and green dragons. The wyrms are often very curious about what the collectors could do for their dark designs.

Chaos Cultists

Throughout Krynn's long history, the seductive whisper of Chaos has filtered throughout Creation. It has attracted beings from all races, outcasts hungry for power, chafing at the limits of the circumstances they find themselves in. They are not granted power, but rather knowledge; in return, they serve Chaos and his ends. A heathen priest or renegade mage typically leads a cult group. In some cases however, the most vile and intelligent creatures of magic itself lead the cult group, walking in the guise of a mortal race.

Chaos cults are thankfully unaffiliated with each other, operating instead as a near private army acting out the whims of the cult leader. In return for their servitude, cult members are granted the Touch of Chaos in a dark and vile ceremony. This is power the leader wields as a magic-user. They bestow a gift in the form of a mutation, a mark of loyalty and a tool for the group to use. Some have enhanced senses, others special abilities, none though are untouched. The touch binds them to the leader, making them his or her eyes, ears and sometimes hands. The changes are permanent, and in the event that a lieutenant wrests control of the cult from the leader, a second ceremony will bind the followers to them as well, if they are capable of using magic. If not, the minions scatter, taking refuge in catacombs and sewers or, in the case of those that come to their senses, trying to find a cure for whatever change was inflicted on them.

Chaos cults engage in different activities: raiding, murder, grave robbing, and theft, all to gather resources for the leader. Some leaders though have lost their faith in Chaos' power, operating the cult group as a gang, becoming rich then abandoning the followers. Those who do abandon their children sometimes come to regret it, as their more powerful followers hunt them relentlessly, or in some cases take control of the cult and seek their former master. Throughout the ages they have been hunted by knights and priests, adventurers and mages, some of whom have succumbed to the lure of the cult themselves, forsaking their former life for a new purpose–fulfilling the will of the charismatic leader. They are reviled and hunted by beings both light and dark, and more than one celestial or infernal being has entered the world with the sole purpose of wiping out a cult.

The Deepsong Brotherhood

The Brotherhood is a loose confederation of the pirates of Ansalon. There is no real hierarchy, it is a system of shifting alliances where the strong rule and the weak hope to advance by plotting against their betters. They have hands in smuggling, ship theft, extortion, slaving, prostitution and other dark deeds in most major coastal cities of Ansalon. Over the Brotherhoods long history, its fortunes have waxed and waned, but it has always survived to fight another day. It is not uncommon for those who thwart or defy them to be found hanging from a yardarm, their ships or warehouses burned, or families murdered. Indeed one of their greatest defeats was at the Battle of the Boneyard, a treacherous reef bank near Ergoth's Nordmaar island colonies. There the pirates and their Zebolim allies encountered an Imperial war fleet when they were expecting only merchant ships. The battle was the stuff of legend, and utterly broke the Brotherhood for decades afterwards. More than one career in the Ergothian admiralty has been made by a great victory over the pirates, with a fleet sunk or a stronghold destroyed. In response though, other careers ended in scandal or worse, courtesy of the vengeful remaining pirates. They are not to be trifled with, and have ties with thieves' guilds, military groups, and at times cults such as the Zebolim.

Disciples of the Risen Kingpriest

There are those who believe that Beldinas, the last of the Kingpriests, did not go far enough. They believe that the destruction of the Towers was not the work of the wizards, but was in fact the justice of the Kingpriest smiting the mages. In their twisted ideology, the destruction of Istar and Ansalon in the Cataclysm was the work of the wizards, further evidence that they are evil. Even though the continent was ravaged, they believe that the Kingpriest survived, protected by Paladine in the Beyond, and will return when followers of great piety gather and strike Istar's enemies.

They possess several pieces of the heartchambers, including at least one greatshard from the tower of Losarcum. The glittering black shard is worn embedded in the breastplate of the High Acolyte, the Kingpriest's representative on Krynn. It is this shard and breastplate that he will present to Beldinas when he returns from the beyond, as proof that his flock is devout. When that day comes, the followers will strike, with Beldinas at their lead, at those who had wrought such havoc and destruction. Even now they hunt mages, sacrificing them in dark

rituals to prove their piety, the flayed skins decorated in the ancient church tongue, litanies begging forgiveness of Beldinas for their misdeeds in life.

Frostreavers

The Frostreavers are a society of wealthy Palanthan gentlemen, an eccentric group of armchair explorers that use their money to fund expeditions to Krynn's South Pole in search of the legendary civilizations there. They are devout gatherers and collectors of artifacts and lore of the twin kingdoms, as they call them—a legendary ogre kingdom draped with gold and finery, and a strange city that descends into a rift in the world's surface. Occasionally, one of the members will accompany an expedition, but so far, there have been no major discoveries. The society is named for the fabled war axes of the Icefolk. The axes were given to the founding members of the society, a band of adventurers that aided the Icefolk in a war against the loathsome thanoi. The mage of the group was able to enspell the axes given to the surviving company members, to preserve them for the trip back. They hang in the great hall of the society, chilling the air around them, reminding the survivors and children of the founders of their legacy, but not melting over the passage of years.

The Hangman's Daughters

After the fall of Solamnia in the Age of Darkness after the first Cataclysm, a band of mercenaries appeared. All were women, all wore Solamnic armor, but the ideals they followed were very different than those of the Oath and Measure. The original members were orphans, daughters of Solamnic Knights slain by the wrathful populace for not averting the Cataclysm. Their banner is a broken sword in a noose on a blood red field. They fight for steel, self, and comrades, and throughout their history they have ridden for both Light and Darkness—whichever paid more. They formed over several decades, as the first leaders, the twin daughters of a Knight of Caergoth, gathered supporters in Abanasinia. When their numbers had swollen with a score of other exiles, they returned to Caergoth by sea, hiring mercenaries to aid them, and sacked the town in 23 AC. Anger and egos sated, pouches full, they returned to Abanasinia and claimed an Elven fortress deep in what had once been northern Qualinesti. They ride forth from time to time, as likely to pillage the land as to liberate it. They have no grand designs, save for continuing their existence and never again falling victim to the whims of a fickle peasantry.

Imperial Nordmaar Company

The company was formed in the century before the first Cataclysm, in the wake of the first successful circumnavigation of Ansalon by an Ergothian captain. Her discoveries led to the establishment of several colonies in uncharted lands around the continent, the most prominent of which were the Nordmaar Islands. The lush islands, largely isolated from the rest of civilization, were the source of much wealth for Ergoth, in the form of spices, plants, animals, exotic hardwoods, and slaves. Nature's bounty was ripe for the picking, and pick the company did, with an Imperial charter that gave them dominion over the islands and a fleet that at the time dominated the oceans. It was only a matter of time before Istar took note of the colonies on its doorstep, and launched a challenge by placing their own representatives there. Cargoes of misery sailed east and west, to the great cities of the age, while mundane items returned, bribes for the tall, red and blonde-haired natives to continue their servitude.

As time passed, the company and the Istarians came into conflict, but by then, Ergoth had lost interest in the islands, having secured other sources for much of its products. The fleet was withdrawn, and without it to protect them, and by extension the Istarians as well, settlements of both colonial powers increasingly fell prey to minotaurs and other pirates. The resourceful company employees and governors continued on, bringing in enough profit to sustain imperial support and the charter, but the days of great profit were gone. Until the Cataclysm struck. The charter, which granted dominion over all the lands of Nordmaar was still a valid treaty, and was even more potent because Istar, its chief opponent, was destroyed. The company and by extension, Ergoth, had even more land to exploit, and it was in the Cataclysm that the company found its savior—salt. The sea floor thrust above the surface was littered with cakes of salt, as the water evaporated. All that needed doing was its collection.

The governors in ravaged Ergoth itself had no knowledge of this turn of events, indeed the posts operated independently for over forty years before a company ship returned to the former islands and now the new peninsula. The representative that stepped ashore was shocked to find that the warehouses were full of salt cakes, meticulously recorded and stacked, as was company policy. After the salt harvest, the forests too began to spread, creating even more room for exotic spices and woods to flourish. Many of the cities of Ergoth were rebuilt from the sales of the colonial products, after the Cataclysm.

There are three types of men in the company, the traders themselves, the factors that lead them, and the governors. The traders are the rugged and resourceful men who operate the forts and ships of the company, the factors are

the heads of each outpost, or factory, while the governors are the aristocrats that fund the venture and decide its course. The imperial families themselves have a stake in the success of the company—the crafty writers of the charter decreed that the rulers of Ergoth are majority non-voting stockholders, thus ensuring support from any dynasty so long as the dividends roll in each year. They specialize in the court intrigues that make such an enterprise continually viable, and in the centuries of the company's existence, few are the governors that have not become obscenely wealthy. Governors and factors are cut from a similar cloth; both are as different from the traders as night and day. The former are thrifty diplomats with career aspirations, the latter the loyal soldiers of a commercial empire. All take threats to the company and Ergoth very seriously, and constantly engage mercenaries and adventurers to protect outposts or shipments, survey trade routes, secure supplies, transport dignitaries or rare commodities and in some cases, to quell a rebellious populace. Hiring is, in their view, much more cost effective than maintaining a standing force. Of course, much of these activities do not officially happen. Those that complain or claim otherwise are quickly dispatched to distant corners of the realm, or so others are told.

In the days before the Cataclysm, the company seal on a product, whether painted, stamped or branded, was a sign of quality and competence, but also a reminder of the long arms of Ergoths power. As the Company rebuilds and reinvents itself, the seal is being seen more and more on crates, bottles and flags, across the world.

Kalimites

The Kalim was a mystic warlord, a half-Elven descendant of the desert princes, and the self-proclaimed voice of Kiri-Jolith on Krynn. In 64 PC, he raised an army of fanatical followers to drive the Solamnics and Istarians out of the Sun's Anvil region, the desert land of Dravinaar. Elves of northern Silvanesti joined his horde, as did some Kagonesti, believing that only he, the Kalim, could stem the tide of human expansion. They believed that if the humans hungered after worthless desert, the forests of Silvanesti would be even more tempting to claim. Though the court of Silvanost did not condone his acts, neither did they condemn them—instead they watched with elven dispassion, awaiting the outcome.

His true name is unknown, his title "Kalim" simply means 'warrior' in the tongue of the desert nomads. His rebellion started small, with an attack on an Istarian outpost, but soon grew to the point when the Kalimites were striking the small oasis cities scattered across the region. Istar and Solamnia dispatched forces to deal with them, but neither met with success. Instead, they wandered blindly, seeking rebels that seemed to appear out of nowhere, then disappear back into the canyons and dunes. The mounted knights in their armor were unprepared for this sort of foe, and the Kalimites slowly whittled away at the force.

As their successes grew, so did their favor among the local populace. From Micah to Zaladh, Solamnics and Istarians could buy no food or water, as the descendents of the desert princes dared hope that they would be free of the Solamnics, the Istarians and their Kingpriests. Seeking succor at the tunnel gate of Qim Sudri, the city later called Losarcum, the remaining knights were captured by Kalimites, the news of their abduction reaching Palanthas itself. Soon after, bodies started to be found in the public fountains of Istar, members of the missing contingent. One appeared each week for thirteen weeks, until public pressure to rescue the survivors reached a fever pitch. A second force left Istar with Istarian soldiers to supplement, lead by Imal Fabran, a descendant of the pre-Kingpriest era warlord that tamed the lands and brought them into Istars fold. They too were slaughtered, smashed upon the Sun's Anvil and driven west to Yandol, where they tried to heal their wounds and regroup to try again.

The leadership of the cult finally met its match in the Sargonids, a warrior-priest sect devoted to the condor god. They took up the cause when one of their sacred sites was despoiled. The site was a battleground, known as Shalam-akhar, the Bloodwell of the Gods. Sargonid legends say it was where Kiri-Jolith and Sargonnas clashed in the All-Saints War, where the furies, spirits of vengeful justice, were born of the split blood of the gods, beholden to neither. The Sargonid monastery stood on a plateau amid the blood-red spires, a place of stark and horrific beauty. The temple and school were razed, the masters and acolytes overrun and slaughtered. The thirty-nine remaining paladins, on a meditative retreat at the time, returned to their monastery, retrieved their armor and set off to hunt their quarry. They took no food, nor personal belongings, knowing that they would not return even if they survived. The tale is an epic one, a song of battle and prayer that left hundreds dead before the Kalim and his circle of personal warriors were cornered atop a mesa. The fanatical tattooed Jolithians fought and killed many of the bronze-bedecked paladins, but finally all were dead save the Kalim himself. The Sargonids sheathed their weapons, and camped at the foot of the mesa, determined to wait him out. They were intent on denying him an honorable death in battle, and their patience was rewarded. After 13 days, the Kalim, mad with hunger and rage, hurled himself to his death. The Sargonids, under a banner of truce, walked to the Solamnic and Istarian encampment, and presented the Kalim's head to the leader of the force. His body was left for the vultures. The Kalimites' plunder was never recovered; their lairs remained unfound, even after the Cataclysm.

Keepers of the Light

Across Ansalon, on desolate coasts, mountain peaks and in bustling cities, the Lightkeepers stand watch. They live and work in the lighthouses that guide travelers on land and sea, worshippers of Sirrion, the Sacred Flame. The Cataclysm destroyed some of their towers, but many of the dwarf-built bastions still stand fast against the darkness. Indeed the more isolated ones have thrived, their fortifications giving rise to towns, and providing a refuge in times of war. The Keepers themselves are quiet and humble, spending their time preaching and praying, when not tending the lenses or fires of the tower. Some towers have been abandoned since the Cataclysm, and the Keepers continually seek to survey and reclaim them, salvaging what they can of their legacy, and reusing the materials in the ruins to shore up other sites if they cannot be repaired.

The Legion of Daltigoth

The legion is a pseudo-military order of aristocratic Ergothian patriots, imperialists of the old mold, who seek to rebuild the hordes of Ergoth and drive the ogres from the ancestral capital. Ask the ogres though, and one would hear of how they are in fact reclaiming their own ancestral capital from the human interlopers. Regardless of who is right, the Legion acts as a lobbying force in the imperial court, securing periodic expeditions to salvage artifacts, survey ruins, and plan, in the long term, the liberation of Daltigoth.

Many members are of older imperial families, people whose ancient lineages originate in the old capital region. They often fund expeditions to their ancestral castles to reclaim relics and heirlooms, and in some cases to drive out the occupants and destroy the structures. As Ergoth's fortunes began to turn after the Cataclysm, the Legion grew in prestige and membership. The ultra-patriotic legion found new allies in some of the exiled Knights of Solamnia, when the knights discovered the current state of their pre-Solamnic heritage.

The Penitatum

They were the worst of the worst, a band of brigands and thieves, cutthroats and ne'er-do-wells. From every civilized race, and some less civilized, they found their way to Newgate prison in Kalaman. They were sentenced to lives of hard labor behind the walls of the notorious gaol, but when the War of the Lance came, they were the only hope the city had. Offering full pardons, the city released two hundred of the prisoners: dwarves and ogres, minotaurs and goblins, elves and men alike, under the leadership of Vinmar Leigh, a disgraced knight. The dragonarmies were ravaging the defenses of the city, and the prisoners were levied from Newgate to bolster the defenses. Their leader gave them the name Penitatum; their tactics were unorthodox, brutal, but effective. Those who survived earned their freedom and a memorial stands on the city's eastern edge to commemorate the redeemed nameless dead that defended so valiantly. Many of the survivors stayed together after the war, forming a mercenary company from the only family they had known, the bonds formed in the months of war carrying on afterwards.

Kiri-Jolith gained new followers in that war, and though they gained no spells, they studied his teachings devoutly, finding purpose in just wars to defend the downtrodden. New members join from time to time, former prisoners paroled after their terms, escaped prisoners seeking a new life, or others pardoned for service to the city. The only rule of the company is that for each member, there is no life before they joined, no family, no comrades or contacts. That life is ended; they are redeemed in the regiment, and it is there that their loyalty must lie. Traitors are dealt with harshly. As a mercenary company, they have traveled throughout the continent, fighting for just causes, and spreading the teachings of Kiri-Jolith.

The Skiffman's Guild

Originally led by priests of Reorx and Shinare, the Skiffman's Guild controls the canal traffic in Solamnia. They rule the waterways that crisscross the Vingaard valley, transporting goods and people for a price. Their craft range in size from small, hand-poled gondolas to larger, animal-powered paddleboats that carry tons of cargo over great distances. There have been time in their history when they have blockaded towns in petty trade disputes, and other times when they have transported refugees and soldiers for free. The Knights have tried to control them, but after several instances when trade, the lifeblood of any nation, came to a halt, the government opted instead to let the guild function on its own.

The guild has representatives everywhere, in every hamlet and city—from the rural ferryman to the harbormaster of Palanthas. Those who open new independent routes soon find themselves visited by representatives of the guild, and few turn their offer of friendship down.

Tour Umbria

A cabal of wizards, the "Shadow Tower," exists within the Conclave, and was formed soon after the Conclave itself was established. Its existence is rumored, its structure informal, its membership secret and limited. Its members attempt to manipulate the fates of nations, and gather artifacts of great power for themselves, bolstering the magic that aids their political efforts. They are a select group, meeting rarely and only when necessary. They prefer to act through

intermediaries, agents and slaves, to protect themselves. If the Conclave could be certain of the membership, something could be done to control it, but the Shadow Tower has existed for millennia as the "Sixth Tower," complete with its own strongholds and servants, hidden far from the eyes of others.

In the days and years after the Siege on Sorcery, they led secret expeditions into the ruins of Daltigoth and Losarcum, killing even other mages that discovered them, including the official recovery teams from the Conclave itself. This is of course not widely known, for their existence is little more than rumor. The lost expeditions only added to the rumors of the ruins' dangers, which aided the teams' secret recovery of bodies, artifacts and other salvage items. It is rumored that in a secret valley in the Khalkists, the heartchamber of Losarcum and other rooms of the Tower have been partly reconstructed, a refuge for the Shadow Tower, in a place others would not think to search for. This group does not hunger for power, for with power comes responsibility and prominence. Instead it seeks influence. It desires to bend the ear of rulers, to influence actions through politics. The masked mages are powerful, but not omnipotent—secrecy is their greatest tool. They have protected the Conclave, sometimes from itself, throughout its history.

Zebolim

In the dark depths of the oceans dwell darker things still. Though few in number, the Zebolim, the children of Zeboim, are a powerful group. The cult groups are only loosely connected, each being led by a priest or priestess, who speaks the teachings of their dark mistress. With sacrifices to gain her aid, they wage covert war against the surface peoples, sinking ships, summoning storms, and raiding towns with minions of the deep. They are fierce opponents of the followers of Habbakuk.

Aspirants to the cult must make a sacrifice to join, and each aspirant's sacrifice is different. Some must give up a hand, others an eye, others a living being of their flesh. In return, she grants them the power to travel her realm unimpeded, and limited control of her children of the sea. When not on land, they plot and plan, hoard and butcher in temples and ruined cities deep below the surface of the ocean. There they experiment with magic and breeding, warping beings to serve Zeboim better.

The cult spends much of its time securing sacrificial subjects, luring them to her monstrous minions or her bloody altars. Zebolim also spend a great amount of time hunting for artifacts of Zeboim. The legends say there are many—weapons, items, shells, and pearls—scattered across the primal seas during the All-Saints War when Zeboim fought Habbakuk in the depths. Their battle ended in stalemate, each claiming victory, but agreeing to share rule of the seas. Habbakuk's followers, too, seek the artifacts to use them for good and to prevent the Zebolim from finding them. The departure of the Gods mattered little to the Zebolim. The sea remained, so they refused to believe their mistress had abandoned them. They were instead spurred to bolder acts when they learnt that Habbakuk's followers were no more.

Many pirates are found among her devoted, choosing prime victims from among their raids. Indeed some captains lead groups of Zebolim, casting spells, summoning storms, and turning their ships into floating sacrificial platforms.

Though they are a blood-cult, they are by no means unskilled in manipulation. Many are the towns that have unwillingly or unwittingly built a shrine to Zeboim, making sacrifices to placate her of their own volition. Such devotion amuses the sea queen, for there is little that pleases her and her followers more than the smell of mortal fear.

The Way of the Seekers

My chosen area of scholarly expertise has long been the phenomenon of false religions, cults and cabals that prey upon a destitute or otherwise desperate person who only seeks relief from the ever-constant struggle of life. Using smoke and mirrors, minor magicks, even elaborately staged miracles, the common factor among these false faiths is always to dupe people into believing and tithing.

The Seeker religion is no exception. From a loosely connected cadre of wanderer-disciples to a dominating presence in Abansainia and Southern Solamnia, the Seekers are by far the most successful of the sophist faiths. But to call them misworshipers is misleading; what marks the Seekers as different from other sensationalist groups, such as the Belzoratic Cabal or the Verdant Greenmen, is the peaceful[1] message of hope and prosperity through community.

In the midst of famine and plague wrought by the Cataclysm, the men and women who would become the first Seekers lead their neighbors through despair to something resembling prosperity, which then evolved into new gods born of the strength of the community. Make no mistake, the Seekers were as beset by corruption as any powerful organization of any day, but at their heart was a moral tenacity that rekindled in many the idea of piety. Even today, after the return of the true Gods, the fall of the Seekers, and the fallout of war over most of Ansalon, the effects on community and personal faith wrought by the Seekers can still be felt in places such as Solace and the Lordcity of Haven.

Imagine, then, how pleased I was when a general request to the Library from one Tika Majere for "the facts" about the Seekers landed atop my escritoire. Summarily I poured over the holy text *Gratio Praxis*. Much of the Seeker's literature was conceived in verse, but is found recorded only in prose. Where appropriate, I have restored passages to a likely approximation of their original composition. Interspersed in the entries you will find my footnotes to help the reader understand conventions unique to the Seekers.

The first three selections offer an insight to the subtle message of unity found throughout the *Praxis*, followed by a pair of poems that are intended both for the Seeker priest and his audience, and lastly two poems and two prayers that focus on the Seeker gods.

—*Norman Thoms, Aesthetic, the Great Library of Palanthas*

The First Seeker

The flock to ruin falls should
My staff and hand abate;
As men doth[2] fail when gods
Forsake us to our fate.
Behold! I let them wander;
The sheep dwind' and die.
So too need men their gods,
Lest meet men their demise.
Chance met a dwarf at road-fork
I ask'd, "What gods have ye?"
From 'neath beard bellow'd, "Reorx!
Only and all we need!"
"This god your pray'r doth answer?"
Ask'd I in sinc'rity.
Guffawed the dwarf, "Nay, sir!
Who needs divinity?"
To the elf woods walked I
And ask'd, "What gods have ye?"
Elf-prince gave soft reply,
"E'li is all elves need.
Chosen children in his eyes,
We live by his light bless'd."
"Your prayer he sets to rights?"
Ask'd I, the humble guest.
"Nay, alas," spake he, "he's gone.

He tests us in our faith."
"Nay, alas," Spake I. "He's gone,"
"He's left you to your fate."
Thus began my trav'ls to
The lands of Anslaon.
Seeker of Gods a'new;
Man's faith must be reborn.

Three Deaths[3]

The old man, weak from standing bent
Faces great'r trial than any yet sent,
For without Gods, without the flame
Of truth to guide, a man o'any name
Doth three times die.
Speech, rendered slowly, which field needs sow?
The death of the mind creeps unseen, slow.
Long moments lost in the mists of thought,
Mead taken twice, meals taken naught,
A'bed he doth lie.
Dress'd in shadow, cloak'd in death's scent
Man passes to corpse, no more time lent.
Life's beat ends, foul, bed-rid, bed-lame.
Rest ye sir, we lament o're your name,
His sons doth cry.
Grief, lamentations, son's sorrow,
In the past left, left for the crow
Life beats ever on; in it all men are caught.
Against this third death all men have fought;
His soul doth fly.
Thrice dead, each man, upon leaving Krynn,
Thrice dead, thrice lost, thrice the sin,
But with new Gods, in hearts and mind,
Seekers of New Gods, in truth ye find,
With hope doth lie.

The Waiting Man

Old man sitting by the side of the road
Wherefore do you sit, let thine tale be told.
A'waiting for word of Paladine
I wait patiently on the divine.
Daft man! Wherefore? What hope thou to find?
The gods have left us; leave them in kind.
Here I've been waiting and here I'll wait;
I'm patient, thou'll see, he'll come a'fore late.
The man sat there each day that I passed
Headed for market where people amassed.
Seekers told word that New Gods came;
I ran to the man to tell him the same.
Alas poor man! The gods have left thou!
Alas thine waiting's left thou untold;
Seeker Gods bring hope but none t'thou:
Alone, murdered, by the side of the road[4].

Song for the Seeker[5]

A Seeker must see first with his eyes
To discover falsehood and outrageous lies.
Then you must see and seek with your mind
Where trick'ry and deception are oft divined.
With your heart look upon all things last;
For the heart is where truth takes its repast.

Zeshun, the Keeper of Memory[6]

You do not walk alone in this life
Watched by Zeshun through your strife.
Each swing of your scythe, each bushel'grain
Each swing of your sword, each blood'd stain
Each curse, each prayer, each breath and sigh
Zeshun keeps e'ry deed, e'ry truth, e'ry lie.

The Waking Prayer[7]

Honor Olmathea as you do your mother;
Without her grace we are lost.
Honor Faere as you do you wife;
All things grow by her hand.
Honor Zeshun as you do yourself;
For she sees into your soul.
Honor Cadithal as you do your lord;
For his good word is fortune.
Honor Sauvay no less than the others;
For his strength is ours.

Prayer Before Sleep

I am humble before the New Gods.
Sauvay, Fatherlord, the Blessed Revenge, stay your wrath from our hearts this night that we may sleep in peace. Olmathea, Motherlord, Giver of Life, the Protector, send your mercy to us, for we are humble servants. Cadithal, Tradelord, we bargain our humility for rest, and upon waking will again take up your call. Faere, Daughter of the Gods, Goddess of Growing Things and Inspiration, bless us with your gentle touch that love might grow in our hearts this night. Zeshun, Queen of the Night, Keeper of Memory, guard us from wrongdoing in our dreams, and remind us of our humility upon waking.

The Seeker's Words

When his son fears of goblins and ogres in the night, the proud father makes a show of laying out his old sword to ease his child's quake. And when the daughter wails of her lost tooth, the gentle mother performs the tooth-rite to give purpose to her child's distress. As parents, we comfort and

teach our children using tricks[8] of the eye and mind. In this way, the Seeker is no different than our mothers and fathers.

Keg Blessing

O Blessed Ale! Was the ancient cry,
That men of old gave to sanctify
A newly open'd brewmaster's keg
Gift o'the Gods! As they popped the peg.
But where now do they send high cheer
Without a god's blessing upon their beer?
Take heed of your head lest it o'er froth
The brew mast'r be praised to drown our wroth.
By whose hand is your mug over-fill'd?
The brew'r, the mill'r, the farmer who till'd!
Gift of Men! Is now our shouted prayer,
Malt mead and stout are now man's affair!

Notes

1. Many readers will no doubt be aware of the events in Solace during the reign of the High Theocrat Hederick. It should be noted that Hederick was decidedly mad, though brilliant at turning the peaceful-minded words of the *Praxis* to his own ends. The actions and practices of the larger Seeker faith, while no less sensationalist, were far more contributory.
2. A significant portion of the *Praxis* is written using specific archaic forms not in common use since well before the Cataclysm. It is likely the Seekers wrote in this manner to give their message an air of antiquity, but the result is often – to the poet's eyes – a hackneyed verse.
3. The number three is prevalent throughout Seeker lore, likely an inheritance from the true religions (i.e. the triumvirate of balance regnant).
4. This type of near rhyme ("untold" and "road") is common in Seeker poetry; often it is used to call subtle attention to the line(s) in which the near rhyme is found. In this case, the listener is made uncomfortable both by the old man's fate and the awkward rhyme.
5. Most passages of the Praxis make clear that they are either for a Seeker to recite or for a Seeker to learn and take lesson from. "Song for the Seeker," "The Seeker's Words," and "Zeshun, Keeper of Memory" are ambiguous as to their intended audience.
6. The hierarchy of the Seeker gods is a much debated issue. While it is clear that Zeshun was not the *omnis potentia*, this poem reflects the clever way in which all Seeker gods were immerged in everyday activities.
7. "Waking Prayer" and "Prayer Before Sleep" prey upon the appeal of ritualistic protection in religion; this was a common practice among all sophist faiths, but here again one can see the Seeker approach focuses much more on personal faith and community.
8. Perhaps the biggest "trick" the Seekers pulled was the naming of their New Gods. The closest the *Praxis* ever comes to revealing the truth is found in the final selection "Keg Blessing." Those who wrote the tenets of the Seeker faith did indeed invent new gods, but gods based upon the god-like qualities displayed in men. The "trick" was getting people to believe in themselves, by believing in false gods.

The Bardic College of Ergoth

The bards of Ansalon come in many different forms, from wandering minstrels to tribal shamans, but few are recognized in any real manner. These itinerant musicians make it their lives to collect and spread tales and songs across the lands, rarely appearing in large cities, leaving that to the domain of the regular street performer. Even among bards however, few ever truly rise above the station of apprentice, there are very few indeed who are formally trained by one of the great Bardic Colleges. In all of Ansalon, there us no college more esteemed or respected than the great Bardic College of Ergoth.

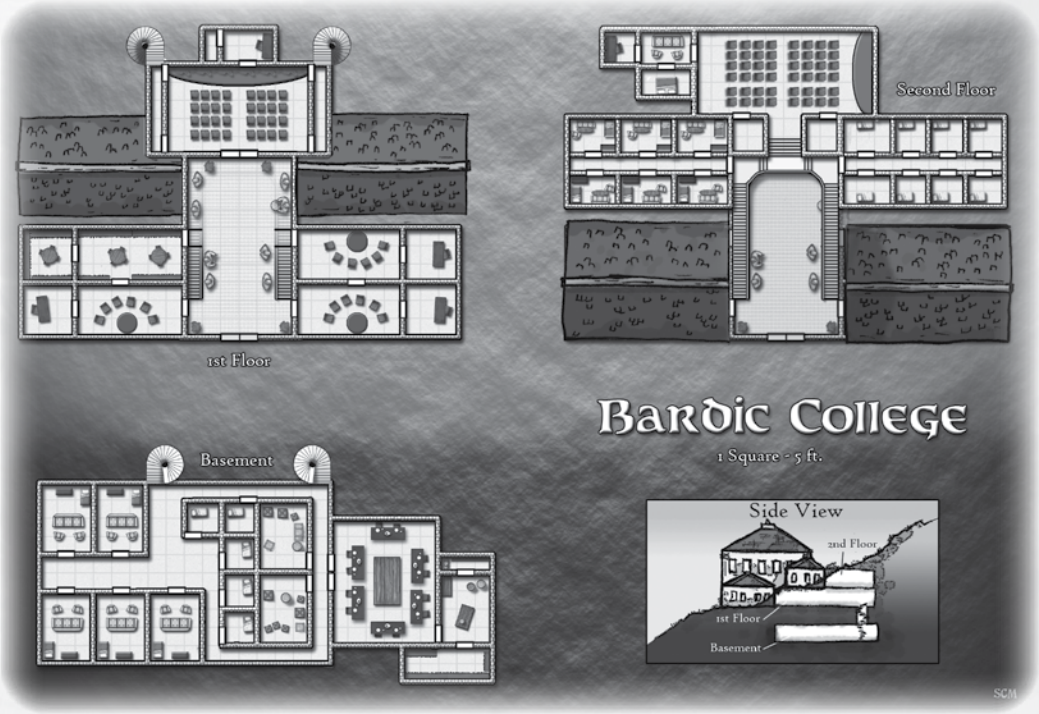
Note: It is a common mistake to confuse the Bardic College itself with the physical buildings that make up the college's campus. On occasion, the two are regarded synonymously, for it is often said that without the Bardic College's extraordinary campus, the collegium would not exist. However, for the sake of clarity, when referencing the Bardic College's physical location the term "campus" is used, and "college" refers to the august body of bards and sages proper.

Let the music rule you, bind you and even the greatest dragon may lay spellbound at your feet.

—Quevalin Soth, Master Bard and College Headmaster

History of the College

Lancton was a newly constructed city of the Ergothian Empire, in the reign of Emperor Quevalin VII (2075-2023 PC), also known as the Restorer. The Emperor was a great patron of the arts and to preserve and nurture the cultural development in the empire, organized for the foundation of a college of the arts. This college was intended to be a collaborative institution within which bards could receive formal training from master bards. The collegium's campus was to be the first such structure devoted to such an organization on all of Ansalon. Quevalin VII sought out several dwarven architects and builders to create the campus, primarily using bluestone and other solid materials so the buildings would last the ages. The Emperor's chief concern was that if the campus were ever destroyed that none of his successors would bother rebuilding it, leaving the college without a place to gather. Thus, he wanted the campus to endure the ravages of time. The Emperor used his considerable wealth to recruit a number of accomplished elven bards from Silvanesti, to serve as the original master bards



and teachers to the hopeful Ergothian apprentices, thereby establishing the Bardic College in both name and function.

After a few short years of construction and recruitment of master bards, the college campus finally opened its doors. The initial interest in being a musician or performer soared, and a crowd of young men and women arrived on the campus doorstep. Such was the turnout that the elven bards were forced to turn many away. A group of fifty apprentices were whittled down to twenty within the first week, many simply having no real aptitude for music or tales. The master bards determined that even twenty apprentices were quite a number to handle, and in later years this was reduced to ten accepted apprentices at any given time.

A curriculum was created to serve as a course of instruction within the college. The apprentices were taught hundreds of songs, legends and poems of the time, and also were trained in the mastery of several instruments. The early apprentices bore heavy elven influences due to their teachers, however this broadened and changed over time. In 1976 PC, Headmaster Asimar announced that the curriculum would be updated by his master bards every twelve years, so as to stay current with world events, and also so that the curriculum would not become stale.

While Asimar's proclamation about the changing curriculum was a welcome one, his reign as headmaster would be short-lived. Following a night of drunken debauchery, the headmaster was caught bedding two of his female apprentices and summarily thrown off the campus, his collegiate privileges revoked, for granting "special favors." A series of headmasters followed, however it was in much later years that the famous master bard Quevalin Soth joined the Bardic College and was begged by the then headmaster Elias to take over the reins. The elven musician took a tour of the grounds and was impressed with the quality of the students, the teachers, and the campus itself. At the behest of Elias, Quevalin Soth became the new headmaster, with Elias stepping down to the role of master bard and teacher once more.

The Empire fractured and suffered under numerous corrupt Emperors over the course of time, and even Ergoth itself broke in twain during the Cataclysm, the Bardic College persisted and flourished. It's ever present elven headmaster saw a number of changes occur throughout Ansalon and continued to work with his master bards in refining the classes and lessons for future would-be bards.

Exterior Description

From all outward appearances, the campus is a stately two-story mansion, built of bluestone into the side of a hill. The second floor built higher and further back on the hill than the first. The only entrance to the building is through two seven-foot tall bronze doors. Even though the doors would easily weigh a ton a piece, through some magic they swing open freely at the slightest touch.

First Floor Description

Through the bronze doors lies a large open courtyard, paved with grey tiles. Magnificent marble staircases rise from inside the courtyard and run the length of the courtyard. The staircases lead to the top floor of the campus building. Interspersed throughout the courtyard are sculpted shrubs, providing some visual inspiration for the students.

Along the right length of the courtyard are two smaller doors. The southernmost door opens out into the wind and percussion room, where musicians are taught the finer arts of these musical schools. The northern room leads into the string and brass section, where the other two schools are taught. On the western side of the courtyard are two further doors, the southernmost of which leads to the oratory, where ballads, storytelling and historical sagas can be practiced. The northwestern room off the courtyard leads into the library, which contains the many sagas and legends of the history of Ansalon, to inspire and inform the students of the college.

From the northern end of the courtyard, two doors lead into a performance hall, used for all kinds of presentations, as well as evaluations of initiates coming to seek an apprenticeship with the college. The rear of the performance hall leads to a small dressing room, decked out with all manner of costumes and a small number of props. From the east and west corners a small spiral staircase leads into the basement of the campus.

Basement Description

The basement is broken into three distinct areas. The western section is set apart for the guest rooms, which are basic and have their own amenities. In the central section are the servants' quarters, while on the east of that lies two large storerooms for many of the instruments, props and costumes used by the students and teachers. In the eastern part of the basement lies the banquet hall. Separated off from the banquet hall are the kitchens and larder, and the extensive wine cellar, which houses all manner of wines from across Ansalon.

Second Floor Description

As with the basement, the upper floor of the collegiate building is separated into three sections. The marble staircase runs to the east and west into the student quarters, and also combines northwards to lead to the grand hall. Leading off the western staircase are the quarters of the teachers and master bards, which are all lavishly decorated apartments for the prominent bards recognized for their talents and ability to teach in such an exclusive school. In stark contrast, the opposite quarters to the east are reserved for the apprentice bards, and are relatively plain apartments, which have basic amenities. The bluestone surroundings ensure that all rooms are well soundproofed and allow for students to play instruments, sing and practice in their rooms without disturbing others.

The central northern part of the upper floor is reserved for the grand hall. This large hall is reserved for performances for respected guests and patrons of the college, or for banquets of honor for such guests. It is also where successful apprentices are promoted beyond their rank for completing their time with the college. Leading off the northwestern corner of the grand hall is a small door that leads to the private quarters of the college headmaster-in-residence. The quarters are filled with exotic instruments and the headmaster's private belongings. These rooms are the most richly decorated in the entire college, as befits the headmaster's status.

College Hierarchy

There is no real hierarchy among bards, as there is no one recognized order beyond a bard and their apprentice. However as a formal institution, the Bardic College of Ergoth does have a minor hierarchy within its ranks. The headmaster governs and makes all decisions on behalf of the college. The three master bards also serve as advisors to the headmaster.

Initiates: Any would-be bard seeking to enter the college who has not been formally accepted as an apprentice. The college bards also consider any known practicing bard who has never been trained at a recognized college to be little more than an initiate.

Apprentice: A would-be bard who has passed the entrance exam and accepted by the teachers to study under them at the college. The entrance exam consists of a single audition before the three master bards where they judge whether an initiate has enough talent to be taken on for a bardic apprenticeship.

Journeyman: A bard who has successfully passed the Bardic College course.

Master Bard: One of the three teachers of the Bardic College. To hold the rank of master, these bards must have mastered several instruments in each musical school, as well as being able to recite several hundred historical sagas and ballads. Bards can only gain the rank of master bard after being recognized by the college headmaster.

Headmaster: The leader of the Bardic College of Ergoth. The previous headmaster normally promotes the headmaster from the role of master bard. However in some rare cases (such as Quevalin Soth), master bards are selected from outside.

Future of the Bardic College

Even while the War of the Lance rages across Ansalon, and the Whitestone forces rail against the mighty Dragonarmies, the city of Lancton remains relatively untouched. All of Ergoth Proper is isolated from the war, and those in the Bardic College are free to practice and refine their music in peace.

The future of the college is bright, with a rise for the need of bards and levity across the war torn lands of Ansalon. Nothing can quite soothe the savage beast of war like the gentle sound of music.

Exploring the Mystery of the Bündesphar

Chapter 21

(The so-called "lost chapter" from *Laws of Krynn*, compiled in the time of the first High Clerist.)

Man and smoke. Fire hours old. His hair long, juts from his head, neck, shagged down his spine. Uniform tunic and pack in a roll by the tree he huddles against. Stares at the smoke through the curve of twin daggers, a lens. Four wolves facing the fire, sit around the ring of heat, cough to each other, growl. Two men, two women, sitting next to their wolves. Moons above Neraka's mountains catch the rising column of soot from burnt logs. Through the lens, in the smoke, red, silver, then first, the black. Ripple, changing place. Reveal the history and sacred mission.

Starbirth. Against the Dark Queen and her allies were the Gods of Good. Each side using living light, living dark. Forging weapons. Birthing monsters, heroes. Clever tricks won battles. Nothing won the war.

For inspiration, Takhisis traveled to the outer marches of existence, drank from the Great Well in the Plains of Chaos. Her dark creations grew dangerous with the power of her Well-born madness. Edges, sharper. Fangs more venomous. Thousand-headed serpents with black-iron galleon bodies and wheels larger than lakes. Leagues of flowers vomited deluges of acid. Blades wailed for the souls of new victims. Her new armies of night never broke ranks, charged light-bringers without fear. The gods of good were pressed back, toward their bright keeps, high walls. Krynn's surface surrendered itself to the poisoned influence of the Dark Queen's madness. The sky wept black rain.

Where Takhisis was content to send servants to perform her bidding, the gods of good took to their own walls, threw spears of pure Light, called floods of power. Held the armies, slowly pushed them away, back to their own lines. Again, Krynn's surface surrendered itself, but this time to the other power, as dangerous to the new world.

Amid the clash of continuous battle blew the Horn Resounding, signal of the High God's return. All gods looked up, to themselves, each other. In the heavens, the golden Horn blew again. Fighting ceased. A third blast. The heavens opened, revealed the High God's great right hand. It swept over the wounded, bloody Krynn, accused each lesser god of harming the world too much. The gods put away their toys, their weapons, soldiers, retreating to their places in the Godhome before their greatest prize met final doom.

The water from the Great Well fled the Dark Queen, taking her madness. Eyes clear, she saw her creations without guidance lay blind waste to the land. Taking council from the other gods, she walked Krynn again, destroying those weapons that could be broken. Others would not be undone. These she buried in the Abyss, in places more secret. Those she could not bury she fought, found even her might was not enough.

Takhisis bade the world and stars to bring forth a servant, loyal unto death, loyal beyond. Her request was answered. From his great hunting ground loped Canus, green-eyed, white-fanged. Coat silver, sometimes black, brown. Takhisis stood unafraid before the Lord of Wolves, offered her scent from the palm of her right hand. Canus found the Queen worthy of loyalty, but loyalty was not enough. She must be ruthless, strong, to lead the pack.

The Lord of Wolves took the right hand of Takhisis in his mouth, biting. Without cry, Takhisis demanded Canus release her hand. He bit harder. Drew divine blood, drunk hot from the vein. Takhisis pulled. In great wrath, she struck the Lord of Wolves on his muzzle, harming herself more. Blood spilled over white fangs, staining fur. Canus did not release his jaws. Clenched harder.

Takhisis struck down, on the head of the Lord of Wolves, forcing fangs deeper, clear through her divine right hand. She did not relent, battering Canus, forcing him to his forelegs. Steaming blood soaked his muzzle red. Canus did not relent. The Queen of Darkness bent forward, weight of the Wolf Lord dragging her down.

Takhisis reached into the dark night to pull down the crescent of Nuitari's moon, used the curved black dagger to remove her own hand at the wrist. She stood again, straight, divine blood poured forth. Watched Canus chew her hand, bones crushed, flesh in shreds. Takhisis said nothing, made no complaint.

The Lord of Wolves also stood, dropped the hand in front of his master. The Queen of Darkness reset her hand in its rightful place. Healed, whole. Having drunk her blood, Canus offered himself, standing, forelegs on shoulders, bared fangs to her throat. Now Lady of Wolves, Takhisis bared her own fangs, taking the Lord's divine blood into herself, forever completing the great Bond.

Together, the Lord and Lady of Wolves fought the Chaos-inspired Dark, the Bond protecting both on the great Hunt.

Conversation with unnamed Keeper of Historical Records

"And why a Lord of Wolves? Why not a Lord of Bears, Lord of Lions, Lord of Flounder? Is there a Lord of Cats? I've never heard of one. Why not any of these things? My scholar friend didn't quite know. He had ideas, but he could never be sure. His theory went something like this—it's what Krynn needed at the time. Krynn didn't *need* a Lord of Flounder, so, no Lord of Flounder. Krynn did need a Lord of Wolves, and that's what it got."

Hand-written historical note

(Found in the sidebar of "Krynn's Ages," by Lord "X." Unpublished, author in hiding)

Though it was often said the Bündesphar Corps was started in the Age of Might, it is more accurate to say it began in the Age of Dreams. However, at that time, there were too few to term it a "corps." It was not until the Age of Might that the litany of the bündesphar was first spoken.

In the Age of Might, the Dark Queen brought us the word of Canus. Canus is the faithful. Canus is the guard. Canus is the hunter. Canus brought us the Bond between wolf and man, wülfbunde and master, both to the Corps. Nothing can break this Bond. Nothing can come between this Bond. No force can sway this Bond.

Account of Unnamed Scribner

(Found wandering the ruins of a temple to Takhisis)

There once was a man, somewhere in Ansalon, during the War of the Lance, who lost everything to dragonfire. I'm not just talking his home, his crops, but his wife and children, his friends, the village where he lived, the woodlands where the village had been built by his ancestors. He lost even more than that. He lost faith in his goddess, none other than Takhisis herself. He lost his mind, his good sense. And somehow, during the seeming and nearly systematic destruction of everything he possessed in the past, possessed in his present, and could ever possess in his future, he survived completely unscathed. He believed that not even the Queen of Darkness could be so cruel to one of her faithful.

This unfortunate man wandered the ruin of his life for many weeks, alone and, if the words can possibly convey a fraction of what he felt, utterly bereft. And one night, among the smoking plain where even the smallest animals had been laid waste, he willed himself to die. And being no ordinary man, living in an extraordinary time, his heart slowed its beat, his eyes dimmed. The blood in his veins thickened. His thoughts moved as sluggishly as water in a near-frozen river. After days and days without food, his muscles finally surrendered themselves and he fell to the earth on his back.

And there they were. The twin green stars of Canus. And don't forget, the Lord of Wolves is not known to everyone on Krynn. But this man looked up to the stars hanging straight above him, wherein he gave himself up to the heavens. He let out a harsh, parched howl that made blood rise from his throat and foam his mouth. The Lord of Wolves heard him.

I'm not sure if I will describe what happened next. I'm not sure I can do it justice. It frightened me at the time, and frightens me to think of it now. There's a difference between the fear felt in the first moments of combat, and the fear of seeing, for lack of a better word, the divine. I have one time felt dragonfear, and that was not something to be repeated, but I have never before felt awe. You understand, being a simple scribe, I'm not used to feeling anything more than being tired, hungry, or put-upon.

Thus I will say in simple words what happened. The man became a wolf. Or the man, who was really a wolf, became a man. . . . or something.

I told you I wouldn't be able to do this justice. The Bond? He was granted the Bond with himself? I don't know. What he became was frightening, awe-inspiring, majestic. As if the Lord of Wolves was made flesh. What did he look like? His hair was long, jutting from his head and neck, and ran shagged down his spine.

What became of this man-wolf? I don't know. But I'm sure the Dark in all its forms trembled that night.

Excerpt from a Linguistic Text

(title and author unknown)

Even their name, "bündesphar," and other parts of their speech, such as "wülfbund," are part of an ancient language, probably the same language from which come such names as "Sturm," and "Gunthar uth Wistan." It may have been the language spoken by the Dark Queen herself to the wolf-god Canus.

Arms and Armor of Irregular Light Troops

By Sir Malcolm Reynard. Retired, lost at sea

"The daggers of the bündesphar are mid-length and curved, and they use them two at a time. The teeth of the scouts are either filed or grow into fangs like their wolves. Suspicion is that new scouts file their teeth, but as the scouts grow older and serve longer in the corps, their teeth naturally take on the tendencies of their canine companions. The man becoming wolf, and the wolf becoming man."

Chapter 21

(The so-called "lost chapter" from *Laws of Krynn*, compiled in the time of the first High Clerist.)

A wolf's howl echoed in the high, surrounding hills. The scouts did not move. "One of our patrol has lost his wülfbunde. He bears the Grieving,'" said Arana and dug a line with her heel, toward the fire. "Shall we suffer him to live?"

Another howl echoed in the high hills. The voice of a man. The wolves around the fire were still, like their masters. "By the word of Canus, we must judge the Grieving. The decision of the patrol is final. The decision can be only life or death. As captain of this patrol, I cast the final vote."

Each of the scouts turned their back to the fire. Arana scratched another line through the first, forming a cross. She turned her back to the fire, wülfbunde following without touch. "We have all agreed to the judgment of Canus. By dagger and fang we have agreed."

Narrative description from Glyphs and Non-Magical Symbols

(By Elspeth Smythe, author missing)

In the center of the clearing was a rock cairn covered with dried blood. A pair of Corps knives formed a crescent, handles stuck in the ground, tips touching. Drawn into the dirt between the handles of the blades was the glyph of the Grieving's wülfbunde.

Conversation

(between two high-ranking officers of the Dark Queen's army in a tavern, both later killed in battle)

"I have seen man and wolf have walk through warring armies, through terrible waves of *dragonfear*, and between ranks of the undead. One time, I saw a scout walk past a kender who taunted him with insults and yet the scout kept walking."

"A taunting kender?"

"By the cracked skulls of my ancestors, I swear it!"

Taken from the foreword of *Alchemy of the Wild*

(By an unknown druid of Chislev. The text has been lost for many years, only recently discovered)

Scouts of the corps prepare a kind of general-purpose healing powder, which has the ability to heal wounds, soothe sore muscles, stop bleeding, and a host of other "in the field" injuries. The powder is red, and carried in a folded leaf-packet. A little pinch of the powder goes a long way, and very little is needed to cure most ills. This substance works on both man and wolf, but it is not known if it will work on anyone outside the corps.

Chapter 21

(The so-called "lost chapter" from *Laws of Krynn*, compiled in the time of the first High Clerist.)

The five wolves of the bündesphar patrol walked to the hillside edge, peered down, then at Blood. With a paw, the alpha wülfbunde dragged a line in the dirt in front of Blood. Blood shied away, paced near the edge, finally sat.

Karn lifted his head. He breathed deeply, tried to raise himself. Blood forced his body behind the man's back and lifted. Karn got himself to a sitting position. Waited, then stood. His right leg weakly supported his weight. Karn touched his canines to his lip, stared at his wülfbunde, removed the rod from his belt.

"Never have you failed me twice," Karn said. "You are the best of all wülfbunde, by dagger and fang, you are the best. With you, I have long been blessed by Canus. I will remind you."

Karn raised the rod and struck Blood once. Blood howled, the other wülfbunde howled. Blood stumbled away, ran in a circle, bit and licked his flank where the rod had struck. The wolf spat, barked fury at his master, moaned, crawled and leapt up, barked again. Karn replaced the rod at his side, checked the bandage at his throat, secured the end. "I am leaving to perform our duty," Karn said. He left Blood standing.

The wolves of the patrol made their way down the hillside wall after Karn was gone. Blood limped. The alpha wülfbunde drew a line in the dirt. Blood crossed the line, final judgment on his master made.

More from *Alchemy of the Wild*

Before I forget, I want to tell you about a curious thing the bündesphar call *lakrak*. Lakrak is a kind of alchemical-natural substance the scouts and their wolves enjoy much like a scholar enjoys a good pipe. Minus had a piece of lakrak that was mostly red, and that he called, coincidentally, "red lakrak." Never told me where he got it. This stuff looks like a long piece of thin vine doubled up and twisted around itself. It has the texture of jerked beef and the red part had a peppermint smell. Minus told me to lick the end of the twist and hang on for dear life. I did the first, but not the second. Next thing I knew, I was huddled in the corner shaking with nervous energy and sweating cold stones. When I regained my senses some time later—and the vomiting finally ceased—Minus told me that any more than the tiniest taste would no doubt have killed me. And not just because I'm a doughy, out of shape, alcove dweller. It would probably have killed a much stronger man than myself. And this was very 'young and immature' lakrak, he said, using the same descriptors as one might use in reference to wine.

The scouts apparently cultivate lakrak, using ingredients they find on the trails they walk, treating it with other plants they similarly find. Lakrak comes in a number of different earthy colors, from red to black to brown to yellow, and a few others. Each color is enjoyed by successively more experienced bündesphar. Similar to my little test, a younger scout trying an older scout's lakrak could result in death. Yellow lakrak is supposedly very rare, and only edible by the oldest and most experienced bündesphar. Yellow lakrak is said to have many refreshing and restorative powers. For good reason, the smell is repellent to younger scouts.

Alchemically speaking, I have no idea what makes lakrak.

Lecture on Graygem Lore

(given by Aesthetic Mabarak of Khur)

"The word used by the scouts is "sichten." It roughly translates as, "the thinness between." In this case, it refers to the thinness between worlds, where things might cross over, one world to the other, or between the Abyss and the material world.

"Krynn is spotted with *sichten*. You can't see them. You've probably at least heard of *sichten* without knowing because, though we can't see them, we can know their influences. A *sichten* is place where crops refuse to grow or a town that should prosper, but never thrives. A place of hauntings. Where there are hauntings (if they're real and not the tales of old women with nothing better to do except waste time and not bring in my wash), you might find a *sichten*. In these places, things from the Abyss or those 'outside' can find a way in, even if only a few times a day, or at midnight, or when all the moons are new.

"I think it may be said that those people made more of evil, or those with particularly evil thoughts, may find themselves unintentionally swallowed by the Abyss if they spend too much time near a *sichten*. And I also think *sichten* tend to draw evil people to them. I've been to towns and villages where everyone seems ready to slit your throat. Haven't you?

"Apparently, a few wizards, some of those draconians called "noble," and the bündesphar are able to perform certain rights or rituals to permanently seal off a *sichten*. Until a *sichten* is closed, whatever lives inside it can never die--at least not permanently. Warriors who defeat creatures or things born of *sichten* may return to the same spot and find their "handiwork" nullified, and the danger still present.

"*Sichten* are usually the cause of misery, but can sometimes be the opposite. I remind you of rumors of pools of healing water or areas where live many mystical good creatures. In fact, according to a scroll I recently read, there is a legend of a guardian water-spirit called a "naga" that keeps away pirates attempting to use its river as a launching point. The result of a good *sichten*?"

After-lecture party for Mabarak on Graygem Lore
(Sadly, Mabarak now missing.)

"We can't see them, but the bündesphar know, they have a 'sense,' when they are near a *sichten*."

Night Terrors: Legends of Neraka
(Author unknown, presumed devoured.)

Beneath Neraka, there's said to be a dungeon known as the Pit. The inmates never grow old or hungry. They live in constant fear, beset upon by strange horrors.

The bündesphar claim there is a *sichten* in the Pit. The *sichten* leads part-way into the Abyss, and has some of the Abyss's salient features, mainly, nobody grows old or needs to eat. The *sichten* is relatively infinite, and is always shaped like the Pit's original structure, a cylindrical dungeon with cells on the sides and a huge pit in the middle. Some say it is the perverted energies of the prisoner's own darkness that keeps them in constant terror.

More from the account of the Unnamed Scribner
I am only a simple scribe and I can only describe what a scribe has known. The Bond itself is so strong between man and wolf that it apparently has properties that can only be called magical or mystical. I've seen the Bond act as a protective force against powers so ferocious and amazing I can hardly find words. There are creatures which will one day walk the world that can remove a man from history itself, steal him out of the River of Time so nothing is left, not even memory of his existence. This Bond can prevent even that strange doom from falling on the scout and his wolf. That's power. That said, most scouts are a patchwork of old scars and injuries, so the Bond is really a very curious thing, indeed.

More from Arms and Armor of Irregular Light Troops
I'm sure you'd like to hear that the bündesphar are second-to-none in combat. Which they are, to a point. I seriously doubt a man and his wolf could defeat, say, a dragon or a Death Knight. But then you would not find the bündesphar in such situations–unless said dragon or Death Knight were in some way associated with Father Chaos or the Dark. In that instance, the dagger, fang, and the Bond would probably be more effective than a force of well-trained soldiers.

Radcliff of the White Robes, a Narrative
(Never completed, author hiding)

Maybe this will also help you understand the strength of the Bond. If you've ever seen a child's attachment to a parent, a rider's affection for a horse, a king's love of country, maybe these things are like the Bond. But the Bond is unaccountably stronger and backed by the will of gods.

There are druids and elves who live their lives in the company of animals, and some of these folk have an undying connection with these animals, and when the man dies or the animal dies, there's a time of mourning. Then life goes on, though with great and continuing sadness. For the bündesphar,

the death of a partner brings a true madness they call the "Grieving." Now imagine a ferocious killer skilled in stealth and vicious combat so stricken by the loss of a partner that perpetual suffering is the day's only food and water. Now imagine that killer wandering your countryside.

Thus do the bündesphar mete out their own judgments and justice, and, for lack of a better phrase, put the Grieving down.

A Bedside Discussion with a Friend

(During the final nights of Loremaster Reed, Headmaster and Keeper of the Solamnic Library at Palanthas)

"This leads into a very interesting and particularly secret area of bündesphar lore. How are they brought into the fold? There is a bündesphar corps, mentioned in their litany. Where is their recruiting sergeant?

"I have a friend, an alchemist, who has his own glassworks. He says that his art requires not only special ingredients, but also vessels particularly made for different potions. He told me that sometimes it is safe to mix something as if you're mixing a cake--just toss things in a bowl, stir, set in the oven for a few ticks, and you're done. Other times ingredients have to be mixed in careful batches, and the batches combined carefully or disaster ensues.

"This alchemist told me of an elixir that can bring the almost dead back to life. I say almost, because if the imbiber is dead, well, you should go through his pockets and look for loose steel. But for the almost-dead, this elixir does the trick and fully restores them to health. Naturally, this potion takes a long time to make, is difficult to make right, and is very expensive, not only because of the ingredients, but also because of the bottle in which the elixir is made.

"Bottles are generally the same--bottom, top, roundy-sides--the same. For this particular elixir, the bottle requires another bottle to be made inside of the first; a very thin, very fragile bottle that sits inside the outer bottle. This inside bottle is filled with the usual assortment of precious and rare things used by alchemists: beads of sunlight, the gaze of a beautiful woman caught in a pearl, booze, and such like. Then the outer bottle is filled with the rest of the concoction. After that, apparently, the trick is to apply heat long enough to the outer bottle, so that there's some kind of change of pressure and temperature inside which cracks the inner bottle, releasing its contents to mix with the rest. If the inner bottle cracks because it's too weak or at the wrong time, the elixir is ruined and you have to start over.

"Now imagine. Somewhere in the world, there's a man surrounded by a ring of wolves, holding them off with nothing but a stick and every last ounce of strength and courage he has in his guts. His body grows tired, his limbs grow heavy, his arm goes weak, but still he fights on. At that moment, there is no more desperate struggle on Krynn. But the wolves keep coming, and he keeps fighting them off, and he fights, and fights, swatting the animals aside, breaking legs, smashing muzzles, until there's only the man and the one wolf standing. And the two stare at each other, and stare, snarling, spitting, growling.

"And then, at the right moment, the inner bottle breaks, releasing that thing inside man and wolf Canus would call his own. The alchemy of the corps is made. The two howl their triumph to the sky, and they are given the Bond.

"At least that's how I understand it.

"There are many variations to these 'recruitment' stories. For the most part, they usually take place in the wild, there's rarely more than one person involved—if I hadn't mentioned already, the Bond is shared only between humans and wolves—and there's often some conflict that sweeps in both man or

woman and wolf. Sometimes against each other, sometimes against another foe. Sometimes man and wolf will find each other in the snow, and to keep from freezing, or being eaten by white-furred bears, the two watch each others' backs until the storm blows over. There have been times when the 'wild girl; of the woods takes in an orphaned wolf cub, and they grow up together in the corps. The stories are rich and varied, and very secret.

"I'm sure you'd like to know what I mean by: 'they take Canus into their hearts.' How does that work? Can someone just look up at the twin green stars of Canus and say, 'Canus, I take you into my heart!' and become bündesphar.

"The answer is no, but once an age, yes."

More from the Lecture on Graygem Lore

"We must look back, much further back, into Krynn's history to understand how the creatures of Chaos come to walk our soil. Imagine a sheet of metal on a black-smith's anvil. Now, take a hammer and mash areas of the sheet thinner. As you guessed, those are the *sichten*. But what does the hammer represent?

"The hammer is the Graygem. When the High God made everything, it was like the sheet of metal, even and stable in a cosmological sort of way. It was the Graygem's passage that 'hammered' reality, caused sichten to appear between the Abyss and other worlds. And with the taint of Father Chaos in the Graygem, well, it's possible for both creatures from the Abyss and the 'extraplanar outsiders'–the minions of Chaos–to find our Krynn."

Various fragments

(From unidentified text discovered in Ergoth)

It pleased the Dark Queen to have the work of herself and Canus continued, allowing men and women to follow their path, their "sacred mission." It's interesting to note that these scouts do not worship Takhisis, nor does Canus ask for worship. Men and women who become bündesphar–wolves who give themselves to the Hunt–do so of their own will and ask (maybe ask is the wrong word, maybe *require* is better) nothing more from the Queen of Darkness and Lord of Wolves than the Bond. When wolf and man take the Bond, they know their lives are dedicated to each other and their sacred mission.

The Dark Queen does not want to destroy Krynn, she wants to control it. And she has the bündesphar to save it.

Two Truths of the Bündesphar:

My life for yours, yours for mine.

Above all things, a man loves his wolf. Above all things, a wolf loves his man.

When a scout or wolf dies, they go on "the Long Hunt." Their souls are taken up by Canus to the god's hunting ground in the Godshome.

What happens there, nobody knows.

Lore

Sometimes knowledge seems so trivial or commonplace that it might not seem worth the effort to record it. My brother learned that weeds growing in our own backyard could be used to battle common ailments. Here you will learn of the jewelry crafted by my dear friend, Flint Fireforge, the magnificent feasts of Solamnic nobles, the ways of love and courtship among the kender, the creation of the war drums of the ancient ogres, and more.

Be it reading an afternoon's amusement or for important research, we hope you find the best use for the knowledge recorded here.

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Flint's Jewelry

Since the death of Flint Fireforge, Hero of the Lance, one item in Solace and the surrounding area has become highly sought after—his handcrafted jewelry. Flint was a well-known master jeweler who created pieces that not only resembled the nature of the land, but also captured the essence of it. This work would earn the dwarf fame and recognition even from powerful figures living in the area.

The process of becoming a master jeweler is not an easy one, and the styles that Flint incorporated are considered to be genius. Straying from the traditional dwarven styles of heavy filigree, large stones, colorful alloys, and exotic minerals, Flint's style was closer to the elven artisans of Qualinesti, a style that uses smaller stones, intricate detail, and created pieces that look lifelike. Flint began to learn this process while his older brother, Aylmar, was mentoring him, but it would take decades for him to create the master style he became famous for.

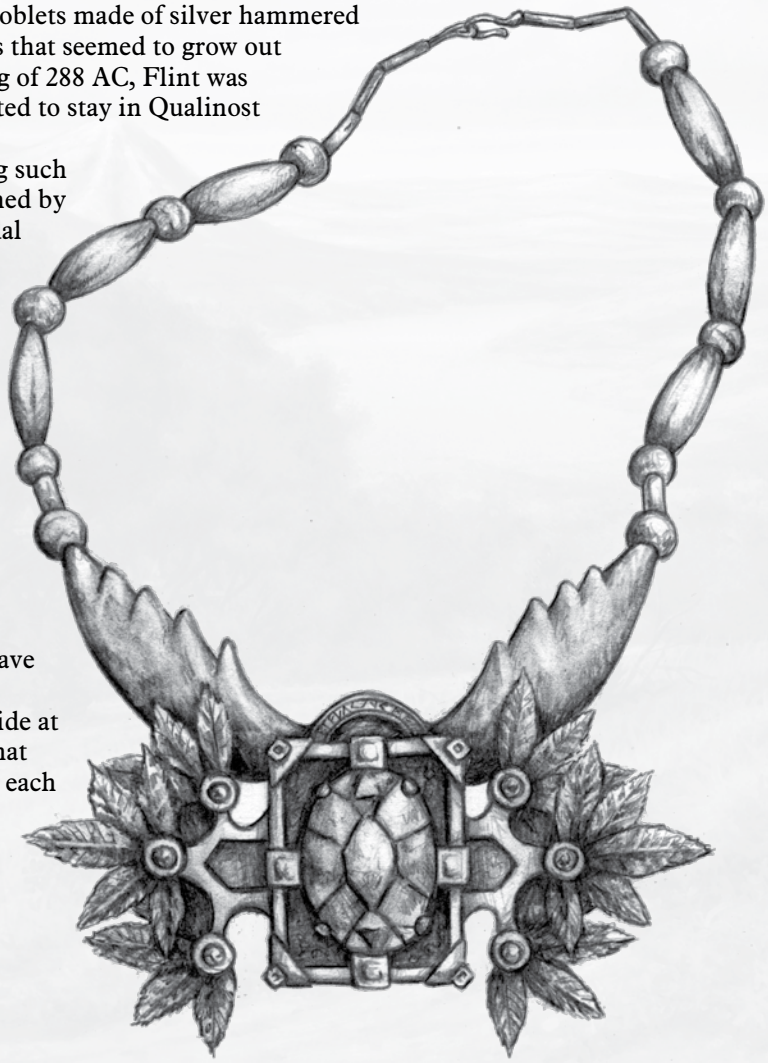
Collectors seeking Flint's pieces have discovered that Flint marked his pieces with a personal signature. This signature would bear his current residence, such as Solace or Hillhome, and provide a date indicating when the piece was created. Most of Flint's works were created in Solace, where he lived most of his adult life, while a few rare pieces have been discovered bearing the Hillhome stamp. For those who are collecting the jewelry created by Flint, the most desired are those created around 260-265 AC, when his craftsmanship became even better.

Many leaders in the lands of Abanasinia actively sought to buy his creations. Solostaran, Speaker of the Sun, acquired first a silver and moss-agate bracelet, and then two goblets made of silver hammered thin and polished to a brilliance. The goblet had three aspen leaves that seemed to grow out of the stem to cradle it. Solostaran so prized these that in the spring of 288 AC, Flint was commissioned by the Speaker for several more pieces and was invited to stay in Qualinost during the summer months.

During the next twenty years, Flint perfected his skills, creating such wonderful jewelry that almost all elves tried to acquired a "Fashioned by Flint." When the Speaker requested that Flint create a special medal for Porthios' *kentommen*, the dwarf delivered. When the elves fled Qualinesti during the War of the Lance, the items that were created by Flint were some of the few that were taken with the Speaker to Southern Ergoth.

Flint was even commissioned to create a piece for a Dargonesti princess, Selana Sonluanaau. The princess did this in secret, giving him only the components and instructions on how to create a bracelet. It turned out to be a magical bracelet, a Bracelet of Foresight. If Flint had only known what he would be creating, he would never have done so, for he despised all things magic.

Flint continued to create his works after he and his friends separated, during the five years prior to their involvement in the War of the Lance. The last piece of jewelry that he was known to have created was an intricate necklace, created for the Mayor of Solace's wife on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Flint took great pride at this request, and the result was a necklace of intricate silverwork that connected to a large emerald at the center, with three diamonds on each side of it in the shape of a V. Each of the six diamonds is nestled in silver in the shape of a vallenwood tree leaf.



The Last Days of the Gnomish National Opera

as told by Mirrashar, Elven Bard

The following are the final excerpts from the Journal kept by the musical directors of the Gnomish National Opera of Krynn, which was located somewhere in the foothills surrounding Mt. Nevermind. The book is currently in the Rare Histories section of the Library at Palanthas. This is part of an almost unheard-of aspect of gnomish culture and history.

(This tome is leather-bound, elegantly carved, and closed with a complicated metal catch. It is three feet tall and two feet wide, and is decorated with every musical symbol known in Krynn. There are also some symbols that are foreign to my eyes, understood perhaps only in gnomish notation. Considering the height of a gnome, the writer must have a moveable stool and an adjustable rest for his arm, or perhaps he sits on the book itself to put pen to parchment. I have translated these excerpts into Elvish from the original run-on gnomescript, and include several annotations.)

{*There is much splattered ink at the beginning of this section, as if the author had trouble beginning his narrative.)*

I pick up my pen, trembling. Even I can hardly read what I'm writing because my hand shakes so much. My words must be set down in this revered tome with those of renowned maestros who have come before me, and I quail at the prospect. I am, after all, only a lowly second trumpeter; the last offspring of Maestro Guylomrostrowilliamsprevinish Prokojakarashawlevineshorek, the greatest director the Gnomish National Opera of Krynn has had in centuries.

(*There is a sizeable pale splotch in the manuscript, likely several tears, or a smudge from his sleeve after he wiped it across his nose and eyes.*)

I regret to say that Maestro Prokohakarashawlevineshorek, my father, had a stroke yesterday during the rehearsal of the new sextet. He is resting at home, his right side (including his directing arm) paralyzed. Human and gnomish healers who we called in at the moment of his collapse all confirm the diagnosis of our official Opera physician: none are certain if he will ever regain full movement. A specialist is supposed to help him with range of motion exercises beginning next week. I don't envy her; assisting the Maestro in anything is no easy task. He has his own way of doing things. That's one reason he is—was—the Maestro.

My name is Wyntonandredizzsatcharnoldmaynardmorricone. A kender I met years ago while I was practicing in a graveyard shortened it to Dizz because I fell off a stone during a high note and bent the bell of my horn up. I've been known by that name ever since, especially because I experiment with the bells of my instruments. I invented and played a trumpet having three small bells instead of one large one last year, but the Maestro said it did nothing to improve the sound. The Maestro is not one for innovation unless he feels the sound or playability is better. So I had to go back to my old horn, at least during opera rehearsals and performances. I keep the other one for dances and shows.

After that introduction, I don't need to tell you that I was born into a musical family. My mother Karalferriermariansteviemaddelenschumann-heink was a true alto diva, a very rare voice among singers. The Maestro fell in love with her as soon as she opened her mouth and sang full-voice in the low tenor range during a tryout. They married two days later, and we little gnomes came along a-one, and a-two, and a-three. Mother was so sick with us that she could hardly sing a lullaby much less an aria, so she reluctantly passed the position of alto soloist to her cousin Ernestinecarpenterannierdasemiramide, and became one of the Opera's top-line vocal coaches.

(*Most of the musical parts and many of the crew positions in the Gnomish National Opera apparently were inherited. Families involved had charts marked with the best singers and instrumentalists in their lineage. Parents and grandparents labored industriously to mate promising young musicians that might produce truly outstanding soloists, chorus members, even crew chiefs, set designers, and costumers. This seems an odd way to do things, but it worked for centuries. The practice was put in place almost as soon as the Opera was established I have found no definitive references as to why, other than obvious reasons of ego, family pride, and job security.*)

My older brother Krupacollinsbuddymoonriferabb was always banging on things, so he became a percussionist. He invented a huge bass drum that could only be played from the inside. He beat himself silly one night during a piece called "The Cataclysm." The Maestro was grooming Krupacollinsbuddymoonriferabb to eventually take his place at the conductor's podium some years in the future, but that's impossible now because he is quite deaf. Krupacollinsbuddymoonriferabb became the music librarian of the opera when it became too much for Aunt Terpsichorewigglearscaballebrunnhilde to handle alone. She now assists him.

My sister Pinchasprimroserollahindenmithkugel played her viola so hard and fast practicing "Bumblebees in Flight" three weeks ago that she started a fire. The burns on her hands, arms, and face are healing, but it's going to be awhile until she can join the orchestra again. Most days, she sits in her chair and listens to the rehearsals, frustrated at not being able to play, her bandaged hands keeping time. Pinchasprimroserollahindenmithkugel yells at anyone who takes more than two covetous glances at her orchestra chair. She'll have to find a new viola before returning to work: her instrument was so badly scorched that the varnish melted. Its voice changed, and not for the better. Our best violinmaker is working on its repair, and is also building a new one for her. I hope he comes up with another innovation, like two fingerboards, one above the other. It was very entertaining watching my sister trying to play that instrument at the same speed she usually attains.

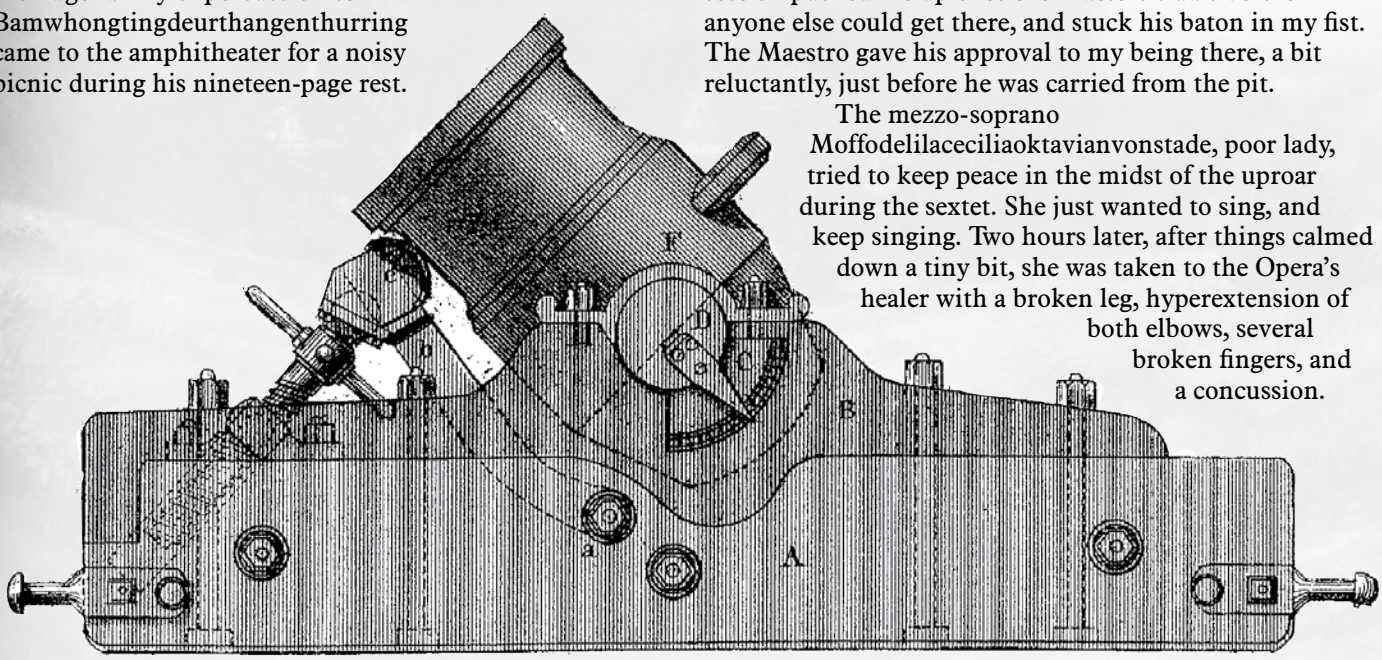
And now I return to yesterday. It was a bad day musically: no one in the orchestra was hitting their cues, entire string sections were out of tune, and the huge family of percussionist Bamwhongtingdeurthangenthurring came to the amphitheater for a noisy picnic during his nineteen-page rest.

Withabrassblastenofortecombooble brought his new invention for the baritone horn that was supposed to catch rats as well as provide an exciting finale to the end of upcoming Scene 7,569. Triggered by a thumb switch, the bell of the baritone shot off the instrument and straight up into the air, glinting in the sun and emitting sparks. We all stopped playing and singing to watch. The Maestro fumed, but I saw him sneak a few looks himself during the bell's flight. The thing, which had been ascending flange first, turned over at the apex of its arc, and came straight back down. Withabrassblastenofortecombooble was in open-mouthed rapture by the sight and the fact that his trigger worked exactly as he'd described it would. Despite many warnings from orchestra members, cast, and crew, he did not move from that spot.

The orchestra has lost a fine baritone player, and the rats paid no attention at all to the spectacular airborne baritone bell.

Things went seriously wrong some time later; the soprano and the alto soloists began arguing with the tenor, the baritone, and the basso profundo over who had held the final note of the sextet longest. The noise onstage got so loud that the singers drowned out the orchestra, so we stopped to listen and choose sides. The females began throwing props, and the males returned the favor. This was not a good thing since we were in the middle of a scene using spears, bows and arrows, and clubs. This is the situation that gave the Maestro his stroke. When he collapsed, there was a long moment of shocked silence. Then the violin and viola sections lifted the Maestro onto a stretcher improvised from two music stands and the slide from a trombone, and carried him home. The trumpet section pushed me up onto the Maestro's dais before anyone else could get there, and stuck his baton in my fist. The Maestro gave his approval to my being there, a bit reluctantly, just before he was carried from the pit.

The mezzo-soprano Moffodelilaceciliaoktavianvonstade, poor lady, tried to keep peace in the midst of the uproar during the sextet. She just wanted to sing, and keep singing. Two hours later, after things calmed down a tiny bit, she was taken to the Opera's healer with a broken leg, hyperextension of both elbows, several broken fingers, and a concussion.



At least her voice is still intact, and she is conscious at last report: I can put her onstage in a wheeled chair tomorrow. Her understudy Amnerisbumbryrisecherubinochristaklausse (who is also her daughter) is badgering me to let her take over the part. The young gnome is so desperate to sing in the opera that she might go as far as bribing me. That might be nice: I could use some good bribes right now. Regalamothalesliemengelshorinoff the third-chair cellist is working on the wheeled chair backstage during his rests. We will test it in tomorrow's rehearsal, even though by that time it's likely to have more than four wheels. The costume department is on overtime to make sure her skirt will bend enough to allow Moffodelilaceciliaoktavianvonstade to sit down. Otherwise, we'll have to write in a part for a servant who pushes her from place to place on a wheeled dolly. She might have fun doing that, and it would look great from the audience.

I feel a little optimistic thinking about that. It's a bright spot among the tension and bickering.

The opera must go on. The opera must always go on. It is the most constantly written thing in Krynn outside of the histories recorded at the Library of Palanthas. It is also consistently practiced, the new parts are performed at least once a quarter, and it never ends. It is the story of our generations, of our life as gnomes. It is necessary to our existence, to our creativity, and to our mental health.

And now I am the Maestro of the Opera. I can already tell this is going to give me nightmares and ulcers.

(*There is an obvious break here. When he resumes, it seems as if Dizz is even more upset than he was when he started writing—his script is more difficult to decipher, as if he wrote in a great hurry.*)

I haven't had time to add anything to this Journal for five days. Between rehearsals, arguments with singers, costumers and the stage crew, and haranguing advice from the Old Maestro that keeps me up most of every night, I have not found time for most of the rest of my duties, not the least of which is holding tryouts for the second trumpet and the first baritone positions. Those started this afternoon. It seems as if everyone from age 12 to 195 who can force air into a brasswind is competing for them. I pared down the number considerably by age alone. There were also six fights during the tryouts, mostly by crew trying to protect Opera props and set dressings which gnomes at the tryouts wanted to take home for mementos. They did that in particular if they failed, or were too young or too old. I ordered all 27 instigators and combatants out of the amphitheater. Being obeyed by them, however reluctantly, felt good. If they objected, which some did, I had them forcibly tossed out by the burly set changers. I commanded that the Opera crew who were involved in the fights should not return to rehearsals until they can control their tempers. They'll probably drag back in tomorrow, contrite. I hope so. The Opera can't do without that many people who all know their jobs well enough not to be closely supervised.

I suppose I will get faster and better at some things, but not all. Not all. There is just too much. How did the Old Maestro do it and keep his sanity?

The most difficult thing to contend with is the reluctance of the singers and the orchestra to accept me as their New Maestro. After all, I played third trumpet for three years, and second trumpet for five. The only respect they have for me regards my mastery of the post horn. So I take it with me to the podium, and I blow it when I need their attention. A good blast on a post horn will always draw gnomish eyes, especially if there are colorful flags hung along the tubing.

One singer who does appreciate me is the mezzo-soprano Moffodelilaceciliaoktavianvonstade. The costumers would have had to hinge her skirt to allow her to sit in the special wheeled chair the cellist made. Hinges are bumpy and never easy to sit on. They also squeaked something terrible, which put the oboist out of sorts. I made the decision not to use the wheeled chair. Moffodelilaceciliaoktavianvonstade likes being pushed around on the special eight-wheeled dolly by the largest gnome I could find, someone from the set construction crew. He and his brother take turns. They need to—four of those eight wheels don't roll straight, so it's always a challenge to get the mezzo-soprano to her mark on time.

Moffodelilaceciliaoktavianvonstade is a delight—she is always on cue, always on pitch, and smiles at me often. She is a bright spot in an otherwise horrible power struggle of the New Maestro versus everyone else. I had no idea this was going to happen. I should have listened closer to the Old Maestro when he told me about How Things Were in the Opera. But who knew I'd have to take over?

The baritone did manage to sing his aria very well before we all stumbled home to dinner late last night, but that's only because he loves that piece more than his life. When I complimented him on his performance, he snarled. One should never snarl at the Maestro. I think I'll have his props and his costumes weighted with lead. Perhaps then he'll stop complaining about stupid little details, straighten up, and sing right.

I announced to the set crew that I'd give an award to whomever comes up with the best invention to make tenor Domingopavracarrascarusotuckerish look taller. He's always been short, and is very sensitive about it, especially when standing on tiptoe or on a box during a love scene with one of the sopranos. Both of them are considerably taller than he. When the tenor heard what I'd done without informing him, he turned seventeen shades of red (I counted them), stomped off the stage, and disappeared. It

will probably be a couple of days before he returns, but he will return—I told everyone that I'd replace him with my own choice of soloist after three days' absence. That's one less day than the Old Maestro allowed. The tenor's role is much too juicy to lose to his ego, and he's got a sixteen-year-old son he's been training to take over when he decides to retire. That was at least one more small victory. When he comes back, Domingopavracarrascarusotuckerish has to try on all the tallness inventions, and choose the one that works best. I'm voting for the stilts that strap around his ankles and have bottoms that look like boots.

The ballet rehearsal was another thing that went well today. I get along beautifully with Dancemaster Fonteynaliciapavlovannamariatourjetétallchief. The orchestra put a lot of cues in the wrong places, but the dance company is so well drilled that it didn't matter. Fonteynaliciapavlovannamariatourjetétallchief and I are having dinner tomorrow night. If, that is, I can get away from the Old Maestro's stern coaching. Dinner with a gnomish beauty is something to which I look forward. I need to consult with the caterer who sets up the Opera's lunch buffets—I understand she likes to prepare exotic dishes for special occasions. This would certainly be a special occasion, at least for me. But tomorrow evening seems years away.

I'm so very tired. I'm falling asleep over my quill, and I've got ink on my forehead from leaning against the still-damp words on this page. I've got to get some rest so I can get up early tomorrow—no, later today—and attack the next series of disasters . . .

(*The next few words are unintelligible. The ink runs into a scrawl, as if sleep took the writer in the midst of a word.*)

Yes, yes, I know it's been another four days since I wrote anything. I can't get used to writing consistently, and there's so much going on. At least I get no criticism from this Journal. The Old Maestro gives me enough for the whole Opera.

Most of today was another trial. The bass soloist Rameyrobesonsarastroclangdonhalipinmorris had hiccups so badly they threw off all the singers including the chorus, and reverberated oddly in the kettledrums and the flyspace above the back of the stage. According to the crew chief, the hiccups carried a note that resonated in certain sorts of metal. The kettledrums popped a few tension-tuning pegs. The timpanist was bruised, but he's returning after a short visit to the healer.

The orchestra enthusiastically pitched in to recommend cures for the bass, and took bets on which one might work. I must say, Rameyrobesonsarastroclangdonhalipinmorris looked silly walking around the stage for several hours with a brown bag over his head. We also tried sugar. When that didn't work, we suggested he hold his breath. He was not amused at that. Scaring him was the most fun: the terrified look on his big square face caused a great deal of mirth until he caught on to what we were doing. The harpist fell off her stool laughing. Thankfully, she is uninjured.

Several hours later, three of the piercedwork lanterns hanging in the flyspace fell without warning except for a few loud pings, apparently the result of that resonating metal. One of the assistant set directors and a tertiary costumer were hit on their heads and shoulders, then caught and whipped about by flailing chains. The overworked Opera healer would not estimate recovery time in either case. I had to replace both that assistant set director and the costumer for continuity's sake. We're too close to performance to do without them. If either one or both gets better enough to return to work, they're not going to be pleased about someone else in their precious positions. I'll get more irritated messages delivered during rehearsal, or screams from their friends and families, as I arrive at or leave the amphitheater.

The Old Maestro has suddenly realized that none of his children are married, so he's buried in family charts to see where the best matches lie for the three of us. After all, there must be someone to take over the position of Maestro from me. My brother is marginal since he's deaf, but at least he has musicianship, knowledge of how the Opera works, and the personalities involved. My sister is a better match, despite some scarring that will occur from her burns. At least those won't translate to her children. She's a dedicated and intense musician . . . ummm, perhaps a little too intense.

But I'm the prize. Apparently my worth as a mate has shot into the stratosphere since I was thrown into the Opera as the New Maestro. The Old Maestro now has at least fifty written marriage proposals in hand. He showed them to me. They're frightening. Some are with mere children; others offer the hand of gnomish ladies decades older than I. There are also several representatives from certain families with eligible musical daughters camping in the front yard. So, along with doing everything else, they expect me to marry as soon as possible. In fact, my family is considering tomorrow afternoon, as soon as they pick the right partner for me. Mother has entered a state of panic—she claims she can't get everything done before then. She's ordered my brother to find the "Procession of the Master Musicians of Krynn," a gorgeous triumphal march from Scene 4,225, and distribute the parts to the orchestra as soon as possible. The musicians are already grumbling about having to rehearse it. My cousin Tilsonsoltivivaldkreislerheifitzyehudibell, a fine violinist who's almost fought his way up to Concertmaster, will direct while I'm . . . uhhhhh, otherwise engaged.

I told the Old Maestro about my dinner with the Dancemaster, and that we hit it off quite well. He got grumpy over her, but at least he didn't appear to be having

another stroke. He told me that she isn't a great match, but she might be considered a good match if he has a little more time to think about it. Remembering Mother's unusual voice, the vocalists would set up a real howl of protest if I married a dancer.

So Fonteynaliciapavlovannamariatourjetétallchief is on the list for consideration. That's something. The Old Maestro picked his own mate, why can't I?

(*Several untranslatable paragraphs follow.)*

The tryouts are over, except for the cannon. Why doesn't someone tell me everything? I didn't know about needing tryouts for cannon! I guess they have voices like almost everything else. They've been on the way from Mt. Nevermind for two or three days now, a long procession of brass and iron.

I need to hire a secretary for myself—I'm not as organized as the Old Maestro, nor do I have his prodigious memory. I hired my cousin Maynardcoreafanfarenagelwingyalperthirt to replace me on second trumpet. I hate to admit it, but his tone is better than mine. I also approved Bassenompahrepeatemblatten to replace Withabrassblastenofortecombooble on baritone horn: that was appropriate because they're brothers. Now I have to approve and supervise the cannon for the next big scene where a war starts. I don't know which war. I'd better find that out tonight. And dig up some good ear protectors: it is not my intention to go deaf like my brother did.

(*He begins again after another break. Spots of ink make it appear that his pen was trembling again. The reason why is not apparent, apart from tension and hurry.)*

I've been bad at not writing again. But I got married while all the cannons arrived. Fonteynaliciapavlovannamariatourjetétallchief and I had a huge outdoor ceremony at the amphitheater. I wished it could have been more intimate, but every member of the Opera and their families insisted on coming. So we basically had a concert with vows buried in the middle. I was right: I am now regarded as the #1 Enemy of Singers since I wed a dancer. It will take awhile to build up respect with the soloists and the chorus again. I have a meeting with Chorusmaster Piecespartsbreathsupportbygoshandbygolly this afternoon after I select the cannon.

On the other hand, my new wife and I are very happy. She has somehow managed to charm the Old Maestro into thinking she can do no wrong. He's even extending some of his newfound approval to me. I think I like this!

I'm getting a signal—the cannons are lined up and ready to fire. My new assistant Glenniechortlehicsniffereesum enjoys running around and telling me where and when I need to be next. She's got a large book in which she writes meetings, rehearsals, and the like. Even my sleep times are in there, when I'm lucky enough to get one.

There are twenty-three cannon lined up beyond the Opera's amphitheater. The last one is supposed to be spectacular. The inventor claims it's rocket powered, whatever that means. Guess I'll find out.

I am truly beginning to like this job! May the Opera continue forever!

(*This is the end of the entries. I have done research in several other histories of the area. All agree that on this date at mid-afternoon a number of explosions were observed, each louder and more terrible than the one previous. The final concussion was enormous. The shock wave was so great that it flattened villages many miles away. There were several collapses of structural devices holding up walls deep within Mt. Nevermind. Most called it the Great Lightning Strike in Gnomeland, although the skies held few clouds that day. Some thought it was an explosive earthquake, or a volcano.*

Only a towering column of smoke and a yawning glassy chasm marked where the Gnomish National Opera of Krynn had made its home. Apparently, all the gnomes involved with that great work and their families had gathered to watch the cannon tryouts. None survived.

We have only this Journal to tell the tale.)

Kender Courting and Marriage Traditions

by Amburrtail Getsintoplaces

This was a disintegrating scroll I discovered in a niche in the last aisle in the last room of the Histories Section of the Library in Palanthas. It is one of those intriguing bits that one doesn't find unless one is seeking something quite different. The author of the scroll is Amburrtail Getsintoplaces, a name I recognize as the one kender who decided that she would write an ambitious history of her race and detail its lifestyles. I believe she was distracted after writing the first two or three scrolls, abandoning her work to wander off in search of adventure. This is the first work of hers I've discovered.

At least we have here several observations of little known kender attitudes and practices from an inside observer. This proves that there is quite a bit of thought put into kenderish living, despite some writings to the contrary. The collective inability to marshal their tendencies for "handling," however, ravels the order that might otherwise make their lives more practical. Their innate joy and natural ingenuousness does excuse most of their shortcomings.

These observations are strictly those of Amburrtail Getsintoplaces, and do not represent those of any other historian of Krynn, either living or dead.

With the permission of Bertrem, whose Restoration staff will be overburdened well into the next century, I am copying Amburrtail's original manuscript, as well as translating it into Elvish. I am also moving this precious original into the woefully small area marked "Kender" in the Library of Palanthas so it can be more readily found by those curious about that race's culture and traditions.

—Mirrashar, Elven Bard, from the darkest dusty corners of the Library of Palanthas

Courting

First there's the Watching Time. This starts when two kender start seeing each other, and both of them get...well, it can only be described as a sort of disease. This illness shows in a little fever and loss of appetite, associated with an overload of silly facial expressions and stupid remarks. There's also much staring off into the distance with a rapt look, both while in and out of each other's company. The couple also does dumb things while swearing they're not doing dumb things. The individuals' hands tremble: they can't even "handle" a rock that's right in front of them, much less pick it with any delicacy out of someone's pocket or purse. They don't speak well, either. Some call this The Tremors.

Good thing this normally doesn't last long, and that kender have others looking out for them; otherwise, many in love would starve. And obviously, this condition is not good when it strikes one during an adventure. Several deaths from wild beasts, cliff edges coming too close, and irate mages have been directly linked to kender infatuation. (See my previous work called "No Fear: Why Kender Always Court Death." *Mirrashar's Note:* I am currently trying to find this scroll, but Amburrtail leaves me no clues to where it might hide.)

Anyway, these symptoms alert kender parents to start the Watching Time, a period when they determine how intrigued the youngsters are with each other, and whether the attention might be serious. (If the kender fall in love when they're older, as with one who's lost a wife or husband, their friends take the place of parents. This doesn't happen often: most single adult kender are too interested in finding out what's beyond the next hill, or behind that intriguing door.)

Anything longer than three days is understood as pretty serious. And it also lets parents know a little more about what little treasures the children hid in their clothing, stashed behind certain chair cushions, and tucked beneath strategic corners of beds. It also gives family members time to retrieve their own possessions, and handle a few interesting items for themselves.

Kender don't have the best memories. Everyone on Krynn knows this. Family members take that into consideration at times like these. If they like a potential boy- or girlfriend, they mention his or her name on a regular basis to drive home the point. They don't speak as much (sometimes not at all) about individuals they don't favor. So the choice of a partner can be limited or controlled by the family. Kender are also known to be somewhat hard-headed: there are those who just plain won't listen to the preferences of family or friends.

Three days, a week at most, seems the norm for most kender attention spans without the assistance of consistent repetition. Those who go beyond that time are very determined to recall an important name or item. Some write what they want to remember down somewhere. Of course, they typically lose their notes soon after and wander off, searching for new intrigues. I knew one kender who wrote his beloved's name on the back of his hand, and lost her the first time he washed before dinner. A kender maiden wrote her boyfriend's name on a scarf and tied it around her neck. Soon after, she befriended a small stray dog that became her pet. She tied the scarf around the dog's neck, thus giving her boyfriend's name to the dog and forgetting the young kender's attentions entirely. (He apparently forgot her, too.)

The ones who do remember someone they're interested in (with or without help from friends and family) number slightly less than half the total of those in the Watching Time. I've recently read some interesting papers I borrowed from Thornyfield Walkslong, the only kender who achieved the status of healer. He believes that some sort of change takes place in the minds of kender well suited to one another so they actually remember each other's names and where they live. Otherwise, no one would get back to anybody, and the extended kenderish family system would disappear into gully dwarf-style chaos.

Well, that's Thornyfield's theory. I think he may be about half right.

When an eligible person visits someone else eligible more than three times, kender relatives decide that it's time for the second step.

Serious Dating Time

That step is the Serious Dating Time. It lasts anywhere from a few minutes to a few months. Thank goodness the stupid looks and dumb actions now lessen for most kender: I have seen a few couples where those got worse, but they're exceptions. Everyone avoids them, and their families normally separate the couple until they return to more conventional attitudes.

Most others during Serious Dating are typical kender, with the exception of having a strong fixation on the object of their affection. A few even give up adventuring. Those who do are often called Silly-Sickies.

During this time, most kender couples try to spend as much time as possible with each other. Arguments and pouting are common because one kender is intrigued by something over here, and the other always sees something interesting over there. Both pull at each other, trying to involve the partner in what they're discovering. One has to give in: if not, the relationship is over, snapped like a brittle tree branch. The two wander off, wondering what happened.

If one kender allows the other partner to dominate the relationship, it should be over. (Sometimes relatives or friends interfere at this moment to cut off the one-sided romance. Older kender agree that there has to be a balance.)

Serious Dating Time mostly leads to Pledging. All right, it sometimes leads to Pledging.

The Pledging

When a couple gets this far, there's always a Pledging Party. Kender love parties, so there is no limit as to how many celebrations of this type a couple gives or has given in their honor. Some go on for a month. Such gatherings are filled with good food and good drink of all kinds; the only things that change are if someone's tried a new recipe, and the types of dancing.

Round dancing is a favorite, although it can be dangerous. Single boys set up a pole at least eight feet tall, on which the girls have attached long colorful ribbons or strips of cloth beneath a placard with the names of the couple printed in large letters. The closest friends of the engaged couple grab the ribbons for the first dance, called a pattern. When the music starts, they cavort around the pole, making pretty designs against the wood with the ribbons as they circle. Skipping, leaping, and whirling around each other is common. When they finish, dancers unwind (or untangle) the cloth and start a new pattern. This is a very social time, and often leads to new partnerships.

Many of the older dance patterns have names, such as "Whingaree" and the "Tuck n' Leap." Kender children are taught these as soon as they can walk.

I mentioned that round dancing could be dangerous: if the pole isn't well wedged in the ground, dancers tugging on the cloth can make it topple. Falling poles at Pledging Party Round Dances always happen during the first couple of patterns, until someone gets the idea of just how to brace it and calls all the dancers to stop and help.

Patterns of ducking and jumping the ribbons often get so complicated that celebrants tangle themselves in knots. They fall all over each other. This falling and tangling has led to quite a few additional Serious Dating Times and Pledging Parties. If the engaged couple, some of their friends, or their parents are standing at the base of the pole, the dancers can and will wrap them against it. One couple was caught on their pole for two days while their Pledging Party went on around them. Good thing the dancers took breaks and decided to play a new game called Feeding the Wrapped Ones. The couple was let loose by someone who noticed their predicament a short time after the Round Dancing area was deserted in favor of other pursuits.

Caterpillar dancing is where many kender link hands or arms and try to do the same steps at the same time. This can be in a long line going forward or sideways, or in a series of short lines going to either side (if, that is, they can all decide which side to go toward at the same time). The leader often invents new dance steps as he or she goes along, and then improves upon them for others to copy.

It's always interesting to see new dance steps go down a dance line. By the time the last dozen kender learn the steps and incorporate them into the dance, the leader has invented new ones and has taught them to the first in line behind him. Thus, seldom do the leader and those further down the Caterpillar line actually do the same steps at the same time. That's one of the reasons this dance is called the Caterpillar.

Whip dancing is a form of Caterpillar dancing done in a long line going forward. The leader goes faster and faster, then adds some fast steps that throw the last half-dozen kender off the end of the line. Sometimes they've got so much momentum that they fly into the food tables and are tossed into groups of kender recovering from previous dances. A number of Serious Dating Times and Pledgings usually occur after eligible males end up in the arms and laps of eligible females, and vice versa. Whip dancing is not done unless there's plenty of room.

During the Chair Game, friends of the engaged couple dance in an inward-facing circle around dwindling numbers of chairs and stools. The goal is to be the one sitting upright in the last chair, which should also be upright. (Chairs and stools may not be fixed to the floor by either magic or normal means such as bolts.) Normally only bruises and sprains are sustained during such fun, but there are stories where up to a baker's dozen kender rush a single stool. Several knocked themselves out. Kender concussions are not happy injuries.

The Ring Giving is the central part of the Pledging Party. It can also be hazardous. Rings are very attractive to kender, especially when they're engraved or are set with sparkling stones. And since the rings given at engagement parties are normally handled merchandise, someone else at the celebration may have possessed them recently. This can, and has, lead to hard feelings. Usually such feelings go away fairly quickly because there are more intriguing things to do at a party than fight. In rare cases, however, irate former ring owners have been known to lob large chunks of rock candy or the odd crystal punch bowl at the couple exchanging rings. Too, most kender don't remember the normal stuff they handled yesterday, much less what new items they had in pouch or pocket last week. And something better is always around the next corner or behind the next door.

The Exchange of Rings itself is often somewhat difficult. Sometimes the love tokens don't get given at all because one kender becomes so focused on the charms of the ring that he or she refuses to give it to the partner. In this case, the families of the lovers have backups ready. These backups may not be as precious as the original (such as a ring of limestone or paper), but it's at least there to hold the place until the reluctant kender finds a different gift. Sometimes this situation involves both partners, which makes Exchanging even more complicated.

As soon as the rings are given, the guests begin efforts to handle them. The first male to get the ring off the hand of the engaged girl wins a kiss from her. If it's a girl who wins, she gets a kiss from the male partner. This often turns into a free-for-all. During some parties I've attended recently, half of the engaged pair actually gave away the other half as the prize. If this happens, the engagement party continues with the new love interest, the name is hastily changed at the top of the dancing pole, and the parents of the old love congratulate the parents of the new. Few kender enjoying the celebration immediately note the change. After all,

this is a party. The replacement is eventually announced to the entire group by the couple's parents, but by that time everyone knows via word of mouth anyway.

The Forever Ceremony

Any couple that manages to keep their rings for more than five days is counted as very special. They're given a "Forever" ceremony. It's an excuse for another party, but this time the theme deals with rare good luck that comes from the gods for protecting the symbols of their love. One couple chained their rings to cuffs on their wrists. Even this didn't unduly challenge a determined and talented handler: she got both before the evening's festivities were finished.

A kender elder makes a (hopefully) short speech before the Forever ceremony begins. (Sometimes that speech is even on the subjects of dedication and love, but not often.) Mostly it's about how to keep their rings, and stories about the best-handled ones. After the speech, the music, dancing, eating, and drinking begin.

The record for ring keeping was twelve days, held (if I remember correctly) by Zandriss Braidtail and Trumbledorn Lockpicker. It is rumored that they had a little help from a mage who wanted to test some new spells. This was never proved. Ever since, engaged couples must swear that they have no outside assistance, especially magical, to keep their rings.

Before the Marriage

Parents collect parchment for invitations, also special colored inks, and pens of twisted glass or long feathers. Mothers and fathers of the engaged couple are responsible for these. Most invitations do get written, but the typical list is unending: parents always remember some relative that went to the wilds of Kargonesti or to Tarsis in the past, and was never heard from again. But that doesn't mean he or she shouldn't have an invitation to this special occasion!

Tied into little scrolls with fancy ribbons, the invitations are sent out with kender intending to visit other communities. Of course, most of the invitations never arrive at their destinations because of forgetfulness, handling, crossing rivers, storms, hungry wild animals, political disagreements, and other hazardous things A few enterprising parents have tried to employ carrier pigeons for the job, but their directions are either swimming in detail or so vague that the poor pigeons get confused. One flew in a circle for two days above the village where the invitations were written before dropping dead of exhaustion. Trained rats, ferrets, squirrels, and small dogs have all been tried with a similar lack of success.

Everyone who walks through the parent's house picks up an invitation. Some take several. Kender never keep checklists, so they're likely to write three or four invitations to the same person.

Old much-faded wedding invitations have been found in some very odd places, such as dragon hoards and in sealed bottles washed up on beaches. They are highly prized by gully dwarves, who believe they are bits of good luck sent to favored individuals from the gods. There is a story told of a gully dwarf who found a kender wedding invitation, and because of it was made leader of his tribe.

Kender parents also always start to keep precious family objects, bits of elegant embroidery, and other interesting pieces of art or whatever for the couple, intending to present them with these at the wedding. Of course, this does not happen. The couple to be wedded sometimes gets to handle the treasures themselves, but not often. The cache always disappears because of the race's kleptomaniac tendencies: whoever is in the house handles whatever interests them. Parents are usually upset about this for little more than a day. They always start another bunch of goodies, which also disappears.

Marriage

Only about 2% of kender make it near marriage with the same partner they started with during the Watching Time. Most switch love interests at least as many times as fingers on both hands before getting really serious: with some individuals, every week means a new love interest. (Those parents get very frustrated until they become used to a constant Watching Time.) Some kender play at love like a game, leaving behind them a string of broken hearts. Others forget about their love interests entirely after a few weeks. Once a couple does make it to the point of trading vows, the celebration gets much larger. And wilder. Some call it the Big Party. (The Other Big Party happens at funerals. The Little Big Parties are reserved for birthings.)

The Ceremony is a very public all-day affair. Friends and family gather at a designated spot, normally the village square. The food and drink is brought in and set on plank tables covered by colorful cloths, and the band begins playing. Bright flags wave in the breeze. There's a traditional search for the bride and groom started by both sets of parents. It ends when a young kender rushes in, announcing that he's found the groom.

Friends carry the engaged kender in on their shoulders from one side of the square. He is usually dressed in new clothes. He trades jokes and songs with everyone for a little while, until the cry for the bride starts up. When the chant for her reaches full-voice yells, her friends swarm in with her in their midst from the other side of the square. She, too, has new clothes, and her hair is braided with bright

ribbons. The couple is not allowed to meet: they're paraded around the area several times, allowing only glimpses of each other.

The parents step forward to speak of their child's virtues. Sometimes they go so far as to warn the intended about a few drawbacks, too. The crowd cheers the descriptions, and individuals typically add a few choice observations. This can go on for quite some time. An aisle eventually forms between the couple, and each is pushed forward until they finally stand face to face.

The parents and close friends, who form a circle around the two, witness the vows between the couple. What is said is not formula—it usually deals with love, remembering, and sharing adventures. The parents are allowed to assist their children with their vows if they forget . . . and sometimes the parents assist when their children didn't forget anything, just so they can get in their say. With such help, the vows sometimes drag on longer than anyone can tolerate. If they get too wordy, friends pull the bride and groom away to the dancing.

Music is a big part of these parties. No band needs to be hired—kender bring their instruments with them, or find them at the gathering. There are always plenty of players: each rotates in as others tire or find something else interesting to do. Small bagpipes, whistles, mandolins, carved wooden flutes, hand drums, spoons, sticks, and shakers (anything of wood or metal that can add an accent) are common. Small-sized violins and bassoons are more rare. Bucket basses are made on the spot if the items needed are available. (These are large buckets set upside-down having a wire attached to the inside of the center bottom on a wooden block. The wire runs through a small hole to the top of a stick or pole a little taller than the player's head. The stick or pole keeps the wire taut. The instrument is played by plucking the wire with fingers, or with a stone shard. Moving the pole with the supporting hand changes its pitch. The longer the pole, the deeper the pitch of the bucket bass. Its voice is a soft resonant *tummmm.*) Feet, especially those with boots, are always used to keep time. I know a male kender with a barrel chest who plays himself like a drum. And everybody sings; it doesn't matter whether they're on pitch or not. Most of them aren't, but as Brambledorn Silentstep the kender elder told me, "Singing is the perfectest expression of joy." With kender, one of their ultimate joys is making noise during celebrations. The other is discovering something Really Unusual while adventuring.

The couple, accompanied by their closest friends, then attempts the Candle Climb. Kender communities save wax from small candles, forming it into a huge candle two stories tall, sometimes taller. The sides are smooth, and the bottom ringed by thick pads of sweet grasses, featherbeds, pillows, and piles of straw. The goal of the couple is to choose agile and adept climbers from among their friends and family who can help them attain the top with a torch and light the fist-sized wicks. (Some kender go into training for this.) Another kender, chosen from the crowd and often led by a distant relative, opposes the couple's team. Much clamoring happens as the members are chosen. When ready, they line up on opposite sides of the candle. The parents yell "Go!" and the scramble is on.

The newly wedded couple charges to the candle using axes, knives, whatever comes to hand to chop foot- and handholds in the wax. The other team does the same on their side. Both parties haul themselves upward, pushing and shoving. Falls are common, as are sprains. The first of a team to the top tries to defend it against the other group. The band plays songs with faster and faster rhythms as the action on the candle moves toward the plateau on top.

There have been pitched battles on the tops of such huge candles, but only for moments. Usually, the leader of the opposing team raises a hand to take credit for reaching the wicks first, then stands back for the couple. They light (or try to light) the wick together, panting and shaking from exertion. Practical jokers sometimes soak the wicks with water, and all they do is smolder. Other times, one or more wicks have somehow been handled, so there is nothing to light. (Recently, there have been some bright friends of the bride and groom who take small candles to the top with them, just so the couple will have something to light in case the wicks are missing.)

Couples who get to the top of their candle without major injury are honored. It is said that the gods bless those who manage to light the wick. Their names go into a special book kept by kender elders. (I've searched for these, but have not found one yet: there are said to be at least for or five in existence. One is rumored to be cached in an old dragon hoard in north Nordmaar. I've wonder why that happened—why is a kender book so precious that it is collected by a dragon?)

When everyone comes down off the top of the candle, feasting and drinking begins. The newly wedded couple normally doesn't stay long after tasting the many special cakes baked, and all the ales brewed in their honor: they're too tired. Friends carry them to their new home, built for them by their parents and the community. Tenderly tucked into their new bed, exhausted, they fall asleep in each other's arms still dressed in their wedding finery. Sometimes one or more of the wedding party is overcome, and nods off on the floor.

The rest stagger back to the party, which continues far into the evening.

My next subject will be the Funeral Traditions of Kender, or What Happens at the Other Big Party.

(Unfortunately, Amburrtail wandered off toward adventures before she wrote more than the sketchiest of notes on her next subject. I have a suspicion she may have attempted to investigate that antique dragon hoard she mentioned. Our loss.)

Minotaurs of the Blood Sea

Since losing my left arm and right leg during an encounter with an Ergothian mariner more than 10 years ago I have been forced to the less than honorable position of House Teskos historian.

My patriarch has commanded that a brief history be made of the rise of the minotaurs' might on the Blood Sea. What follows is a brief account of that period and of the brief period of time referred as the Blood Sea War among the natives of the Blood Sea Islands. To many an unimportant part of the War of the Lance, to we minotaurs it represents the beginning of our greater glory.

—Dastrum Es-Teskos, Chief Historian of House Teskos.

Part 1: The Rise of the Empire

What the weaker people of Krynn call the Cataclysm was a great boon to our race and a blessing from our great god Sargas. After many years of slavery, due to the endless numbers of Istarian humans and the power of their weak gods, the Cataclysm tore the earth apart and created the Blood Sea, turning Mithas and Kothas into islands far from the lesser races of Krynn.

Our litany has always spoken of such a time of blessing: "We have been enslaved but have always thrown off our shackles. We have been driven back, but always returned to the fray stronger than before. We have risen to new heights when all other races have fallen into decay. We are the future of Krynn, the fated masters of the entire world. We are the children of destiny."

Minotaur power and ingenuity was demonstrated when the first ships were constructed. We easily adapted to sea life as if we had been born to it and our entire focus as a race shifted to the life giving sea.

It was at this time that minotaur raids began to be feared all along the Blood Sea; our reputation extended as far south as Icereach and our ships were feared as far west as Ergoth. Ours were the ships that first dared the dangerous Maelstrom of the Blood Sea and to us came the honor of sinking the ships of the lesser races and pillaging their villages.

It was during this time that one of the greatest of our emperors rose among us. Emperor Toroth was an ambitious individual and an incredible fighter, one of the best arena fighters the world has ever seen. Soon after ascending to the throne, he consolidated his hold on Mithas and Kothas and began an unprecedented shipbuilding project that, coupled with the population boom in the islands, created the greatest navy the minotaurs have ever seen.

His first mandate was to scour the Courrain Sea and conquer lands that other races had no records of and which were spoken only in whispered legends. Secret archives, believed destroyed, say that under the command of Eragas the Brutish, his greatest armada actually reached another continent far to the northeast and conquered it. Thus began the great minotaur empire in that strange land whose name is Taladas. Most historians disagree with the archives, and believe the fleet went down with all hands and was lost at sea.

Whatever the truth, Emperor Toroth is honored as the creator of the Minotaur Empire and as the father of the vision that drives us ever today to conquer and subjugated the lesser races of the world. He was such a remarkable individual that the emperors that followed him are mere footnotes until the rise of Emperor Chot-Es-Kalin.

Part 2: The Rise of Emperor Chot Es-Kalin

It has been said that the period before and after the War of the Lance would bring profound changes in our society and in hindsight that might be true.

To understand the rise of Emperor Chot one must understand the follies of his predecessor. Emperor Garik Es-Karos reigned over the empire for many years, becoming weak and decadent, when the first rumors of dragons reached our ears. Any other emperor would have determined whether the rumors were true or would have sent ships to confirm them, but Emperor Garik was weak and his weakness had spread to the Supreme Circle as well. In a time when we needed unity, the great houses squabbled among themselves. In a time when danger loomed on the horizon, our forces stood idle. Our mighty empire stagnated and degenerated into a couple of houses that had little honor left. The problem was that, as weak a ruler as he was, Emperor Garik still defeated all of his opponents in the arena.

The Arena games, which had always decided the succession to the throne among our people, were always free from corruption—or so the majority of minotaurs think. The truth is that they can be rigged as easily as any other contest, so it come to no surprise that Garik was poisoned the day before his combat. While previous games may have been rigged, the use of poison was unprecedented and the mystery of would be such a dishonorable coward as to use poison to deal with an enemy remains today. At the time of his death, rumors exploded in number. Some felt the great houses were fed up with the weak emperor, while others blamed enemies from beyond our shores too afraid of the minotaurs to launch and honorable war. Emperor Garik´s death caused much turmoil and the time was ripe for an emperor who understood that strength did not only mean defeating enemies in the arena.

Emperor Chot Es-Kalin was a renowned warrior and a great mariner. The House of Kalin had never bred leaders and had always been one of the second tier houses. Because of his lackluster background Emperor Chot surprised everyone by defeating all contenders in his arena matches, including the new reigning champion from House Orilg, Akadeztian, and Kobos the great warrior of House Zhakan.

During the first decade of his reign, right before the War of the Lance, Emperor Chot managed to recover all the power his predecessor had squandered. He turned the Supreme Council into a powerful advisory body under his command, with insufficient power to overrule his decisions.

At the time we needed it most, Emperor Chot returned to us our pride, and our vision of a future in which we would conquer all of Krynn, as it is our manifest destiny. Might makes right after all.

His short-term plans included a new bout of shipbuilding and the crushing of the bird-like Kyrie that inhabited the tallest peaks of our islands as the beginning of the conquest campaign. Alas the War of the Lance derailed his plans.

Part 3: The War of the Lance

To us the War of the Lance came as a bad surprise and a rude awakening. Secure in our forgotten corner of the world, the minotaurs would be involved in a war that touched all Ansalon and nearly devastated the continent. Luckily for us it affected the islands far less than the mainland and did nothing to diminish our might. The war also came during our efforts to start a new imperial phase of our history, one in which we would not have to bow to external overlords.

To our shock the news of the upcoming war came in the form of mythical creatures long vanished from Krynn: dragons. Few of us were prepared for the truth about the great beasts and the immense power they command. Soon after, the clerics of Sargas started having visions from the Horned God in which he urged the minotaurs to join the armies of his consort, Takhisis, and crush Krynn under her heel.

In a display of wisdom not normally associated with the new hotheaded ruler, Emperor Chot parlayed with the forces of the Dragonarmies and met with Ariakas, the Highlord of the Dragonarmies and self styled "Dragon Emperor." Despite the mutual wariness between both emperors a bargain was struck. In return for minotaur service in some of their armies, the chosen of Sargas would be left alone to rule the Blood Sea area as they saw fit, all under the watchful eye of the Dark Queen. Of course, this meant no interfering with Dragonarmies ships and cargo, and no piracy or raids against the forces of the Dragonqueen.

All in all it was a far better bargain than Emperor Chot expected. He used his newfound power and draconic allies to exile the sons of political rivals to fight for the Dragonarmies and send them to die on distant shores. Most of them ended up in the White Wing, holed up in the Icewall fighting the local ice barbarians and the biting cold of the region while the fortunate ones joined the Black Wing on their attacks on Balifor and Silvanesti.

Regrettably the Dragonarmies also stuck bargains with less savory individuals such as the honorless Bor Es-Drago, best known as Mad Boris, and a group of exiles from House Karos, who refused to submit to the Emperor's will with their small fleet of five brigantines.

Away from the Dragonarmies' eyes, our local skirmishes against the mariners of Saifhum continued. Much of our luxury goods come from the ships of that island and from various coasters that ply the Turbidus Ocean and the Northern and Southerm Courrain Sea. The War of the Lance severely depleted such trade and replaced it with Dragonarmy supplies. To get the needed goods for our people an alliance with the Reaver, a notorious pirate, was struck.

Close to home the intermittent campaign against the Kyrie continued as a way to test new troops, but since their habitats are on the highest mountains of the islands, contact was rare. An event during this campaign, however, would have a profound impact on our future.

What follows is a breakthrough of all the campaigns that involved minotaur forces.

The Black Wing Campaign

348 AC to 353 AC

Those minotaurs assigned to the Black Wing of the Dragonarmies were a mix of political enemies of Emperor Chot and eager young minotaurs out to prove their worth and honor by carving themselves a name in a great campaign. They lacked the resources to put out a great armada of ships so sea battles were almost unknown for the Black Wing minotaurs, despite some amphibious assaults.

They operated mostly as heavy infantry and as amphibious marine assault units, as they were used on the taking of coastal towns, such as Port Balifor or Flotsam. The other use was as a quick strike force to destroy a walled compound or to draw the defenders to a certain area as a feint.

The Black Wing minotaurs fought very little after the initial campaigns, since the wing momentum stagnated in several places and was relegated to support duty. At the most, they were used for guard duty, and to keep humans from causing trouble—hardly the honorable position many imagined when they volunteered.

Most of the surviving members of the Black Wing made a last push through Balifor to attack the forest of Silvanesti during the year 353 AC. This force was routed by a combination of the Nightmare and the arrows of the returned elves, along with some Whitestone forces deployed for the occasion.

Captain Barak Es-Teskos was renowned for his cunning use of minotaur strength to bring down fortified positions and earned praise even from the Highlord of the Black Wing for his ruthlessness and heroic demeanor.

It is important to note that at the end of the War of the Lance, of all the minotaurs that participated in the conflict, those of the Black Wing are the most surly and less revered. Their numbers suffered almost no casualties, compared to those of the White Wing. For a minotaur it is not a matter of honor to say that he was a Black Wing minotaur.

The White Wing Campaign

349 AC to 352 AC

The scions of political enemies of Emperor Chot made up most of the leadership of the minotaurs assigned to the White Wing. Led by Ronox De-Jaska, a burly but competent commander from Kothas, the minotaurs served mostly as mariners for the Dragon Highlord Feal-Thas. The names Sargas Vengeance, Horned Might and Talon of Fury still strike fear in the ice barbarians inhabiting this forbidden wasteland.

Prior to 351 they battled the elves of Silvanost and sunk a lot of their ships when they started the retreat to Southern Ergoth. It was in fact his leadership during the naval battles that brought much honor to Ronox and secured his status as Flight Marshal of the 1st White Flight.

The time for naval battles drew short when the White Wing was relocated to Icewall as the minotaurs were used as heavy infantry and to man the defenses of Icewall castle along with the walrus like Thanoi.

The minotaurs would get their big battle in 351 when it was decided to destroy the main Ice Folk camp to end the resistance on the region. Sadly the Heroes of the Lance were among the ice folk and they coordinated the defense very well. Feal-Thas chose the minotaurs to lead the charge against the barbarians and along with the Thanoi they suffered the greatest number of casualties during the Battle of the Ice Reaches. There was never an official tally but fully half of the minotaurs assigned to the wing perished in that battle and the rest had to hole in the castle after the death of Feal-thas and the lack of a trustworthy commander.

After the battle the only minotaurs that saw any action were the mariners, as they raided the coast for the remainder of the campaign independent of the new White Highlord Toede.

Most of the surviving minotaurs refused to serve the little hobgoblin, seeing no honor on it, and their position under such an inferior creature chaffed them. In the end most of the minotaurs returned home with tales of great battles and much honor, but many still refuse to talk about their time under Toede.

It is worthy to note that courageous as a white wing minotaur became a phrase used to describe someone who fights on despite the odds.

The Blood Sea Raiders

1 AC to the Present

Raiding the sea has been a way of life for our race since the Cataclysm. It has brought prosperity to our islands and resources to our shipyards, and for most of the time we did that alone without outside interference and without any worry of what may came to us.

Emperor Chot was quick to see that his alliance with Ariakas was a two headed axe. Most of the ships from Saifhum carried supplies for the Dragonarmies and under the terms of his alliance he could not attack them. Most of the coastal towns were also under Dragonarmy control and could not be raided openly lest the minotaurs stir the hornet's nest.

As part of the agreement with Ariakas, Nethosak's shipyards started working overtime, creating a great fleet to supply the Dragonarmies. New training centers were set up in the isles of the empire and they started producing minotaur warriors who Emperor Chot would not send to war.

At the beginning of the campaign, when the Dragonarmies had not made much headway, the minotaurs raided non-conquered towns and harried the few Silvanesti ships that dared the oceans, along with the Ergothian and Solamnic coasters that plied the sea lanes toward Saifhum and Nordmaar. But once they fell under Dragonarmy control the prospects for minotaurs quickly dried up.

Emperor Chot´s solution was to ally with Mandracore the Reaver, the half-ogre leader of the human pirates based out of the island of Karthay. Both Emperor Chot and the Reaver understood each other perfectly and both lusted for the goods of the Dragonarmies.

The bargain let Emperor Chot provide renegade minotaurs, mostly navigators, to man the ships of the Reaver and the pirate lord could raid and attack ships that the minotaur were forbidden. Minotaurs loyal to the Emperor manned our fleets raiding what little they could.

The agreement worked for both sides and the raiding and pillaging brought much wealth to our land, even when we had to share it with the Reaver. For most of the War of the Lance minotaur ships raided enemies of the Dragonarmies while the Reaver´s fleet raided the Dragonarmies ships and those under their protection.

Sadly, at the end of the war, Emperor Chot suffered various setbacks.

Due to the untrustworthy nature of the Reaver, most of the minotaur navigators were executed when the Reaver was captured. The mariners of Saifhum wanted minotaur blood and the untrustworthy half-ogre betrayed them to save his own skin. In retaliation Emperor Chot burned the Reaver's fleet but the damage was already done.

That was not the only setback. A fleet that was sent to raid Saifhum, again in retaliation for the murder of the mariners, was lost to the maelstrom. Confused reports from survivors speak of the legendary "Blood Sea Monster" as an engine of destruction, wrecking many ships, and countless swarms of small red forms that are commonly referred as "Blood Sea Imps" that appeared to draw minotaurs to a watery grave.

Emperor Chot had a contingency plan, however, and it was tied to the Kyrie extermination that had always been a minotaur goal.

The Kyrie Extermination

Forever to the present

The bird-like Kyrie had always lived in the tallest peaks of Mithas and Kothas. Fiercely territorial, they clashed with our ancestors many times in battle, but our superior numbers and might proved too much for them and they were greatly reduced in numbers. Such was our might that never again did the Kyrie present a frontal battle, the dishonorable birds have fought a guerrilla warfare since we destroyed their pride at the battle of the Sky Tear.

Emperor Chot used the Kyrie as a test for the new platoons created in the training camps. All units fresh from training would be sent against the Kyrie to measure their worth and to goad them into open battle. Despite this tactic, during the War of the Lance the Kyrie were attacked almost as an afterthought, and given no more thought than one would give rebellious children.

That changed when Emperor Chot discovered the strange property of an ancient artifact known as the Northstone. A unique diamond-like gem of incalculable value, it was discovered high above the Mithas Glacier, and a tower was built around it. Much later we learned that the stone belonged to the birdmen, and that they wanted it back.

The magical emanations of the stone give untrained navigators the uncanny ability to determine direction and even distance to the shore when they are at sea. Armed with such power Emperor Chot would have the navigators he needed to safely sail around and even near the Maelstrom without fear of losing precious ships and minotaur lives.

A grand project was started in which a great number of minotaurs would be exposed to the magical gem to create trained navigators. Alas as with most plans it was not to be. After only 40 navigators were trained, the stone was stolen from its tower and disappeared from the face of Mithas. The culprits remain unknown even to this day. Were the Kyrie able to spirit the stone away? Unlikely, since the stone would let them migrate from the islands and they are still here. Did a group of lesser races take it away? Not possible, since we cannot be fooled by lesser races.

Because of this setback Emperor Chot has ordered every last Kyrie found dead, and the order still stands today.

Part 4: The Aftermath

The War of the Lance was good for us, but the peace that came after it ended is even better. Free from the yoke of the Dragonarmies we are once more the proud people we deserve to be and the lesser races will know it.

We stand poised to take the future on our hands. Our numbers suffered very little during the war, our ships number in the hundreds, our warriors are all veterans, and our might is second to none. None of the other races can hold a candle to us and we have a strong leadership and a unified people.

The time is now. We have been enslaved but have always thrown off our shackles. We have been driven back, but always returned to the fray stronger than before. We have risen to new heights when all other races have fallen into decay. We are the future of Krynn, the fated masters of the entire world. We are the children of destiny.

Let Krynn know fear and see who its masters are.

War Drums of the High Ogres

I first heard of the drums during an archaeological dig high in the mountains of Blode. It was near the end of the digging season, and while the time had been productive, little had been found in the way of new artifacts. That all changed when a four-sided stela was unearthed. Standing, the shattered pillar would have been almost twenty feet tall, and its surface was covered pictures and the vertically read ogre runes. As we translated our rubbings of the fragmented artifact, it became clear that a tale was inscribed upon its surface. As we read and discussed the archaic language forms and pictograph dialect, we began to think that we had discovered perhaps the first written ogre epic, predating the written forms of the epic poems *Gurchak-pov* and *Chakaru-pov,* though likely not precursors to the oral forms of these tales. The atmosphere in the bleak mountain camp brightened as we all rushed back from our digging each afternoon to hear the days translations, like children eager for a continuing bedtime story. We reread previous sections and discussed them long into the night, making corrections of names and events, for accuracy and for our own enjoyment.

What follows is a summary and analysis (with supplemental information included where needed) of the stela's contents. The narrative is incomplete, as the bottom of the stela was missing and there is some damage to the faces, obscuring some images. This leaves gaps of uncertain lengths periodically throughout the text, as the tale started at the top of one side, proceeding downwards until it reached the bottom of the obelisk, before continuing at the top of the next side. The ultimate fate of the drums is unknown, though one of our scribes recalls reading of a great and grotesque bronze drum secreted in the vaults of the Kingpriest long before the Cataclysm. Sadly, further research into the site and the pillar is not possible—the tides of War sweeping across the continent have barred us from returning, and we have learned that at the command of the Khan of Blode, the pillar itself has been crudely rebuilt, and probably damaged. All that remains to scholars is our rubbings.

—Keegar Tarenn, Library of Kalaman

Millennia ago, in the Age of Dreams, the High Ogres ruled Krynn with an iron fist. Though no power could oppose them, there was little peace, for the realms of the ogre kings warred with each other.

Sometimes for plunder, sometimes for slaves, sometimes for females, the ogre cities attacked each other, but eventually all fell under the sway of powerful regents. The wars changed then, from expanding city-states to growing kingdoms, seeking greater power, until the rise of the first great ogre empires. These spanned dozens of cities, and spread across the lofty mountain ranges of the world. Some kingdoms fought their own battles, relishing the blood-rush of combat, while others disdained it as a primitive urge best suited to animals. They often used *sepoys*—loyal slaves of elf and human stock—to fight for them, though they were led and commanded by ogres. The world shook with the treading of these mighty armies, marching for conquest, greed, and glory. It was in this age of smoke and fire, when the great powers clashed, that the great war drums were forged.

The text says five drums were created, though their locations must be on the missing base of the pillar. The narrative continues at the top of the pillar's next side. The drums were forged of bronze, though legends say that the bronze was cast in molds of bone-clay, and the castings themselves were cooled in the blood of slaughtered slaves. The details of the rituals required to create the drums are mysterious and lost to history, but inscriptions hint at chanting and sacrifices, of great and terrible ceremonies on windswept mountaintops, where the dark gods could bless the handiwork of their mortal servants.

Though their names are different for ogres, I have used the common forms of the dark gods names here. Zeboim granted the fury of the sea and skies, while Sargonnas gave the rage of the earth. From Chemosh came the hunger of the restless dead, and from Takhisis the drums gained the power to stir souls and lead them unto death, and if need be, beyond. The night gods poured power into the blood-born vessels, infusing them with an awful might—power that even fallen ogres speak of in awe. This reverence was confirmed by one of the scribes at the great library, who has lived among them, and specializes in Ogric studies.

The drums were created when Takhisis granted visions to her most loyal priests, each the ruler of one of the mightiest kingdoms. The goddess had long tired of the wars between the cities, for no power could gain the upper hand for long. As one ascended, others banded together to cast it down. While they squabbled, in the forests of the world the elves, the favored of Paladine, grew more and more organized. Some elves even began to raid the outposts of the empires, freeing their kin. Takhisis longed to wipe out the children of her rival, and decided that she must directly intercede and guide

her servants to do so. She gifted them with the knowledge of the drums' creation—whispering the secrets of bone clay and blood-soaked bronze as each was in the midst of a sacred trance state. The clay, she said, must be made from the bones of all mortal races, for the drums must have power over elves, humans, and ogres. When the drums were cast, the bronze would draw power from the clay, and trap it within. Once cast, the drums must be cooled in a mixture of blood, seawater, and the soil of the earth, that they might have dominion over the world and all its inhabitants.

The priest-kings and queens, each in their own city, did as they were bidden, summoning their high priests to begin the preparation. Crypts and tombs were raided, so that the ogre bones chosen were only of the most valorous commanders. Slave grave middens were despoiled, so that the bones of only the weakest and most pitiable wretches could be ground for the clay molds. So it was that the best of ogrekind and the worst of elves and humans were bound together for eternity. Then they took the most precious artifacts they could find, and began to melt them down for the metal to cast the drums. For thirty days they smelted and smoldered in the great forges, while parties of ogres crossed the empire to seek out humans, elves, and ogres, and take their blood for the cooling. The most powerful of the kings, Khalkis himself, set out for the sea, to purify himself in Zeboim's embrace. Walking over two hundred miles on foot, he marched north, and ogres of all castes and clans followed him. They knew of his quest, and desired to prove their loyalty by imitation, to be purified along with him. They were clad in the simplest of garments, ogre-woven linen, coarse and crude, not the fine silks their slaves produced. The ritual pilgrimage was one of purification, and while one ogre king set out alone and unarmed from his city, he returned with ten thousand fanatical followers. It was his destiny, he believed, to unite the ogres by conquest, and lead them all in a mission to wipe the lesser races out, not even keeping them as slaves.

Five artisans worked for months, one in each kingdom's capital, sculpting the drums and laboring under the direction of the high priests. The clerics ensured that each inscription was perfect, each drum a work of malevolent craftsmanship. The craftsmen knew their ultimate fate; they would be sacrificed to gain the blood to cool the cast drums and they went willingly when the time came. Their names are inscribed on the drums, one each on the drum they created. It is also after them that the drums are named, and from these names that ogre vocabulary draws some words even still.

Some drums were larger or more powerful than others, and took longer to complete. The weaker drums were finished first, and their creators, knowing that even one drum could turn the tide in a battle, eagerly attacked their enemies. Such was the case when King Burok attacked the capital of Queen Lattak of the east. To his chagrin, his forces found her drum, Akar-Tempys, completed and very potent. As they drowned in flood and storm, King Khalkis used Sangan-akar and attacked the lands of Queen Gekrell in the south. Gekrell had been blessed with the greatest of the drums, Mortala-nax, but the vessel was unfinished and could not raise the dead as it was intended. Gekrell's city surrendered and swore fealty to Khalkis. For weeks his armies waited, until one day Mortala-nax was completed, and he turned on Lattak's coastal kingdom. His undead were immune to the storms she summoned, and his troops blood lust overcame the fear she tried to instill in them. Meanwhile, Queen Khere, believing herself the favored of Takhisis for the peace she enjoyed, oversaw the completion of Vulchasa-akar, and delivered it to her army, who continued their conquests.

The armies marched, and the nobles continued their wars with each other, all in accordance with the plans of the dark gods. Only through purging weakness, only by the strong vanquishing their lessers, would the ogres remain pure and focused on their dark destiny. Not all the ogre kingdoms had drums, for there were many kingdoms on the continent. Some fought with only their legions and sepoys, sorcerers and priests, but these were all ultimately vanquished or swore to the power of the drum-wielders. Armies broke and fled in terror before Phohemys-akar. At the thundering call of Vulchasa-akar, the earth swallowed whole legions. Storms summoned by Akar-Tempys drowned troops in the fields and at river fords, while Sangan-akar call instilled a bloodlust in the troops of its creator. Finally, Mortala-nax, the greatest of the drums, beaten by Khalkis himself, ripped the dead from the earth, turned the fallen upon old comrades, in a relentless march.

The drums answered their creators' desires, though they did not guarantee victory. Skilled commanders were still needed to lead—the drums only aided an army—they did not fight for it. The kingdoms marched to war, but none could stand before Khalkis. Cities fell before him until he besieged the capitals of his greatest enemies, and took them each in turn. Some kings and governors fought to the end, yielding their drum or cities only when they died, while others bent their knees in fealty, swearing allegiance to the first ogre emperor. Within five years, Khalkis held sway over almost all ogrekind. All except the lands of Khere, who had used Vulchasa-akar to block mountain passes and thwart any attempts at invasion.

The obelisk was broken off here, but it is presumed that this portion of the stela detailed the battles between the Queen Khere and King Khalkis, culminating in the defeat and exile or flight of Khere. From other sources of ogre history, we also know that Khalkis was the father of Khere, but after dealing with her, he ruled supreme as the first emperor. The wars had lasted nearly a decade.

Under Khalkis, the horde turned outwards, bringing its furious might to bear upon the elves in their forests and the humans wherever they dwelt. No slaves were taken; no quarter was given. The other races fought valiantly, but they were no match for the blessed of the darkness. Humans and elves fell before the magic and the might of the ogres until the horde had spread across much of Ansalon.

As is the nature of the Balance though, evil turned upon itself. Within the ogre horde and within the cities themselves, factions formed, all seeking power for themselves. Greed poisoned the ogres to their greater purpose, and they lost their direction. His forces so spread, Khalkis could not hold the empire together, and several of his generals tried to seize power with troops loyal only to them. Within the cities, sorcerers and aristocrats murdered each other openly or through their minions, while citizens rioted in the streets, tired of supporting the armies in the field. The empire was thrown into chaos, and the purges of the lesser races ground to a halt as the armies fought each other or returned to the cities to restore order.

Khere had not been idle in her time of exile. She enlisted the aid of dragons and other, darker beings summoned by her sorcerers, building an army of her own beyond the coastal mountains, far from the capital of Khalkis. With the empire of her father in disarray, the deposed queen struck. His remaining forces poured out of the mountains, seizing cities and provinces as they swept across the continent. Entire armies switched sides, seeing the might he possessed, and believing him to be the true fulfillment of the prophecy. The two armies met on the field at Gehennar: Khalkis with his troops, his undead, and the five drums, and Khere with her traitor legions, demons, and dragons. The battle was unlike anything seen before on Krynn. Storms and earthquakes lashed the field, the undead feasted and blood soaked the earth. Dragons and ogres died, demons were banished and the dead were dispatched to their rest. There was no victor. The armies destroyed each other, and in the eruptions and storms, the drums were lost, buried or taken by dragons as they fled. Emperor and queen, father and daughter, Khalkis and Khere died—she on his blade in single combat, he as he knelt over her body in grief over what he had done.

No other mention of the drums occurs in Ogre history, except as a lament for their lost might. It is not known for certain if the drums truly did exist, but the descriptions of their powers would also explain the storms and combat hardiness possessed by the ogres in the second and third Dragonwars, when they served Takhisis against the Elves and the Knights of Solamnia. Rumors have continued to spread of agents of Takhisis crisscrossing the continent, seeking out artifacts of arcane power. Perhaps the Queen of Darkness seeks these drums to lure the Ogres to her banner once more, as she wreaks her wrath upon Krynn.

Description

The drums are covered in runes and words of power, which glow faintly orange when the drum is played. Some of the runes are inscribed while others are in relief. There are five drums in all, each more powerful than the other as they increase in size.

Sangan-akar or 'Drum of the Warthirster', is the smallest drum, carried in battle by one ogre. It is roughly three feet long, and is designed to be slung over the shoulder, hanging diagonally at the waist and beaten with one hand. Pictographs show this drum being carried in battle, among the troops, and enemies dying in great numbers. It is believed that this drum inspires courage and valor among those that hear it, giving them the strength and will to keep fighting.

Phohemys-akar or 'Drum of Blood's Fear', is a cauldron drum, three feet across and two feet deep. According to the stela's pictographs, it was created to be placed in a chariot and borne into battle. Armies fled before it in the images, hinting perhaps at an ability to instill fear in the enemies of its wielder.

Akar-Tempys or 'Stormcaller's Drum', is a large vertical slit drum, nine feet tall and two feet across. It is stationary during use, but it can be moved quickly on a specially built cart. Both are shown in the pictographs, though the cart may be part of a procession of victory. Jagged forks of lightning rip across the sky and into the enemy forces in the images—it is believed that this drum summons storms and allows the beater to direct them.

Vulchasa-akar 'Drum of the Stonerender' is a large cauldron drum, three feet across with three beating surfaces. While it is large, it can be played on the ground or when mounted on the back of a titanothere, one of the ancient beasts of burden the ogres used. This drum must be played by several ogres, and appears to summon earthquakes and volcanoes. Jagged lines, chasms and fire-spewing cones are depicted below and around the enemies of the beater.

Mortala-nax or 'Gate of the Dead', is the largest of the drums. Its size makes movement impossible, once it has been placed for use. It is a cauldron drum seven feet across, with five great arms rising above the five beating skins. Five ogres beat it in unison. Images show it high above a field of battle, while below, ogres fight ogres who wear the same armor. The only difference is that one side has the ogre rune for death inscribed on their foreheads. Its power is possibly the greatest, for it seems to reach into the realm of the unnatural, raising the dead of the enemy and turning them against their former comrades.

The Othlorx Curse

From the Journals of Nalaran of Armach, in the Fourth Year after the end of the Godless Night

For many who live on this continent of Taladas, dragons are unchanging, a race that exists beyond time itself. Indeed, even for we elves of the Silvanaes, who count our years in centuries rather than decades, it can seem that the wyrms who dwell in the wilds—the Steamwall mountains, the frozen lands of Panak, the jungles of Neron, and even the blasted wastes of Aurim-That-Was—are truly ageless. This perception is abetted, no doubt, by their mysterious absence from the world for nearly a millennium, which ended less than one hundred years ago. Surely the dragons of the elder ages and those of today were one and the same.

Those of us with access to the chronicles of old know different, however. While few histories survived the Great Destruction, when Taladas was broken, those that survived—both among our people and in the ruins of Aurim—tell a different tale. Unlike the few, twisted, reclusive beasts that lurk in the shadows of the wilderness today, the dragons of old were numerous, majestic creatures who, in the words of the scholar Jumaskar of Yush, "*did darken the sky with the breadth of their pinions, and their cries of battle were heard the world over.*"

When we first learned of this difference, the learned believed that the creatures we know as dragons were not the same creatures that once darkened Jumaskar's skies. Until two decades ago, the leading theory was that they were demons from the Abyss that took shape during the upheavals after the Destruction. Others thought they were, perhaps, stunted descendants of ancient interbreeding between the "true" dragons of old and some lesser beast, such as the *tylor* or the *hatori*—or even that some of those lesser beasts had been changed by fell magic so that they resembled the glorious, winged creatures of ancient days. We were encouraged in this belief by the "new" dragons' own name for themselves: *Othlorx*, which in the wyrm-speech means "false."

It was the minotaur sage Bragor ath-Kura who put the lie to this, not by comparing the *Othlorx* to their elder cousins, but rather by comparing accounts of them scribed during the short period after their return. These accounts, he discovered, showed a trend: a gradual degeneration of the dragons, beginning in the 353rd year after the Destruction and continuing at a steady rate ever since.

While many stories, particularly the earliest, are considered apocryphal and unreliable, Bragor amassed enough different descriptions that he could winnow out the more fanciful embellishments—dragons with two heads, say, or those who were the size of house-cats—and arrive at a composite that he called the *Ur-drake*. To Bragor's surprise, and to that of most other scholars, this theoretical creature bore a closer relationship to the ancient dragons than to those we see today. Bragor concluded that the old dragons and the *Othlorx* were one and the same, after all, and that some terrible affliction had caused them to deteriorate over the years, changing from majestic beasts to savages.

As is the way of things, many scholars dismissed Bragor's hypothesis out of hand. It was conjecture, they said; without evidence, there was nothing to support the *Ur-drake*. Furthermore, the existence of a few dragons that did not seem to have degenerated (for instance, the fabled and recently deceased Wyrm-namer of the Hoarspine Mountains), appears to confuse the issue.

I confess that I was one of these skeptics, until Bragor himself sent a message to me, inviting me to Kristophan for "a special unveiling." Intent on proving his theory once and for all, Bragor explained he had embarked on a quest to gather the evidence we all craved. From his readings, he had surmised that a blue dragon was slain by the Uigan barbarians in the Ilquar Mountains of Northern Hosk, around the year 360. Following this lead, he mounted an expedition to the mountains and found the dragon's bones, still lying in the cave where it had died. With painstaking care, he brought them back to Kristophan and reassembled the skeleton at the Lyceum there.

I accepted the invitation, and traveled to the minotaur capital, where I was present at the unveiling of Bragor's *Ur-drake*. It was, we discovered, a much grander, more beautiful creature than the few blue *Othlorx* that were sighted during the Godless Night, and bore a greater resemblance to the mosaic *Varjath and the Wyrm*, dated to more than a thousand years prior to the Destruction. While a handful of scholars—mostly older humans and dwarves—refused to be persuaded, the majority who viewed the bones of the *Ur-drake* applauded Bragor and accepted his theory as truth: the *Othlorx* were the dragons of old, but warped by some terrible affliction.

After the unveiling of the *Ur-drake*, Bragor dedicated himself to making contact with one of the *Othlorx* to obtain a firsthand account of what had happened to bring the dragons so low. While this would ultimately lead to his disappearance and presumed death, during an expedition into the Blackwater Glade five years ago, Bragor did manage to speak with

several *Othlorx* about the matter. They were understandably reticent, and several attempted to kill him (and, I imagine, one finally succeeded), but from his notes on the subject—which he bequeathed to me, should he fail in his quest—I have gleaned the following:

The ancient dragons' disappearance came about because they left the world following a great war on the continent of Ansalon—from where, of course, we Silvanaes once hailed. The details Bragor provided were sketchy, but are in keeping with other accounts of the Third Dragonwar, in which the goddess Erestem—there known as Takhisis—attempted to conquer Ansalon, but was defeated by a warrior known as the Dragonbane. According to the *Othlorx*, Erestem was banished from the world, and took her dragons with her: the blues and blacks, the reds and greens and whites. To preserve the balance, the metallic dragons—silver, gold, brass, bronze, and copper—also went into hiding, bound not to return unless Erestem and her hordes did.

In time, Bragor wrote, Erestem did just that, launching another war against Ansalon around eighty years ago. While no historians I have spoken to know of this war, the timeline coincides with the first sightings of dragons in Taladas in the modern age, so I believe these tales are true. As part of her attack, Erestem called her dragons back from the Abyss and ordered them to fight. Most obeyed, but a handful refused, leaving Ansalon for other parts of the world—among them Taladas. In her wrath, the goddess uttered the following curse, in the draconic tongue:

Tsakur aj khavakh, ngarox drosha'im
Ssukoth ghat chura u shanku yangorx
Taj ku shai u xukhat tsor khasha'im
Ngost a ghan kovat u ghan tsu Othlorx.

In the common speech, this translates to:

Wyrms who shirk duty, who flee from glories,
Be it known that they are traitors and must be shunned.
Any who abandon war and flee to faraway lands
My wrath shall break them, and name them False.

Around the same time, the metallic dragons returned to Ansalon. Freed from their oath by Erestem's treachery, they united to fight her alongside men and elves. Some of the younger wyrms, however, refused to join the battle, and were shunned as a result. Many of these objectors came to Taladas, where they also unwittingly fell victim to Erestem's curse. This caused many of these good dragons to grow bitter and resentful as time passed. Even after the great war on Ansalon, when their gods offered to return them to their former glory, most rejected that mercy and chose to remain as they were.

The changes wrought by the curse were gradual, worsening past the Dread Winter and Second Destruction, and on through the Godless Night. The curse also bred true: when Othlorx mate, their brood bears the curse as well. It is unclear from Bragor's writings whether they are born already twisted, or whether the curse breaks them gradually after hatching, though one reference in his notes to the "squealing, mindless get" of a pair of white wyrms in Panak seems to imply the former is true. Bragor also believed that some Othlorx have bred with *tylors*, *hatori*, and the flying serpents of Neron, to produce even more warped and demented offspring. Such abominations are extremely rare, however, and those not devoured by their parents are almost certainly sterile, so the likelihood of new species arising from this is thankfully slight.

Each hue of dragon was affected in a distinct way:

Black Othlorx (*Shantothlorx*) are xenophobic and capricious, preferring to live alone and slaughtering anything that intrudes upon their secluded territory. In recent years, they have shown an increasing tendency to shun light, seldom emerging from their caves before dusk.

Blue Othlorx (*Kujothlorx*) are rare, for most blues remained loyal to Erestem. Bragor estimated there were fewer than fifty in all of Taladas, though this number is sure to swell as they breed. Erestem punished their treachery over time by making their facial features misshapen, and changing the colors of their hides, which range from turquoise to indigo—and, increasingly, mottled combinations of both. The Othlorx consider these changes hideously ugly, and are ashamed of them. The curse has also bound them to feel tremendous physical pain if they do not honor their word, so they tend not to speak, and can only be tricked into making any kind of promise by the truly cunning.

Brass Othlorx (*Ingothlorx*) are much more common than their metallic kin. Social creatures, they were cursed by making them repulsive to other dragons. They exude a scent called *naj'uk*, which to non-draconic noses registers as a faint aroma similar to burning metal, but which disgusts other Othlorx—including other brasses—the way that the stench of rotting meat might disgust a human. As a result, no other Othlorx will associate with a brass. Desperate for companionship, the brasses often compensate by abducting men, elves, dwarves, and even minotaurs and hobgoblins and keeping them captive. It is not known whether the urge to mate is stronger than the repulsion of *naj'uk*. If not, then the brass Othlorx are bound to dwindle and disappear over the next few centuries.

Bronze Othlorx (*Yochothlorx*) are even rarer than blues, numbering three dozen at the most. The curse has tarnished them, turning them dark brown and removing their gleam. This has left them evil-looking, and other good races shun them. In their shame, the bronzes choose to

avoid all contact with men, elves, and the like, to the extent that most have forgotten to speak tongues other than their own, and those of the animals who dwell near their lairs.

Copper Othlorx (*Vakhothlorx*) have also tarnished, taking on the greenish hue of verdigris, which makes them very difficult to spot among vegetation. They consider their punishment unfair in the extreme, and have rejected all but their own kind, choosing to torment both humanoids and other Othlorx.

Green Othlorx (*Ngurothlorx*)are the most vile and malevolent of the broken dragons, and are extremely territorial. They never leave the immediate vicinity of their forest lairs, even to breed; unlike the brasses, there is no doubt that their number is in decline, and young green Othlorx are extremely rare; those that do hatch are often devoured by their mothers, who perceive them as threats to her territory. During the Godless Night, the greens' coloration changed to a drab olive hue, with mottlings of brown, giving them almost perfect camouflage. Some recent accounts also mention that their wings have grown stunted and useless, and that their young are in fact born wingless.

Red Othlorx (*Ashothlorx*), once the most fearless and belligerent of the evil dragons, have grown timid and cowardly because of the curse. Their coloration had faded and dulled to the hue of rust, and they will do anything they can to avoid a fight—though they will still defend their lairs and young if cornered. They prefer cunning, trickery, and ambush to open battle. The red Othlorx have a scrawny, malnourished look to them that disgusts other dragons.

Silver Othlorx (*Xondothlorx*) are wracked by guilt, and their hides have grown tarnished by the curse, turning dull, dark grey. Unlike other formerly good Othlorx who grew reclusive as a result of their curse, however, the silvers chose to assuage their overwhelming need for remorse by fighting a ceaseless war against evil. They know little mercy, and those evildoers they catch invariably end up dead. They prefer to take human or elven form most of the time, assuming their draconic shape only when necessary. Even Bragor did not know how many such creatures dwell now dwell among us, but he was certain they were more numerous than anyone might suspect—as, I might add, am I.

White Othlorx (*Chakothlorx*) are perhaps the most terribly afflicted of all the broken dragons. Cruel and spiteful even before Erestem's curse took hold, they are now vicious and insane. They have lost the power to speak, even in their own tongue, and can only communicate through snarls and shrieks. As a result of their muteness, they also cannot use magic. Some believe the curse made them witless, but Bragor discovered evidence—geometric piles of boulders in the frozen wastes of Panak—that indicate that they are have retained their intelligence, and have been growing more malicious and enraged as the decades pass, to the point of sheer derangement. When confronted, they attack with fury beyond reason, often resulting in serious injury or death to themselves as well as their enemies. Every white Othlorx older than a hatchling bears some terrible scar earned in battle and many are crippled or disfigured. This tendency toward self-destruction is countered only by their prodigious breeding, and the large size of their egg clutches: some among the Snow People of Panak worry that in a few generations the Othlorx's numbers will grow so that they completely overwhelm the frozen north.

There are no confirmed gold Othlorx, though Bragor did hear rumors of a lone example, known as Skythas, who was purported to dwell in a cave within a rocky spine of an island several miles off the coast of Baltch. Skythas was said to be wildly capricious: furious and vengeful one moment, blithe and merry the next, and then dour and standoffish right after, almost as if he were three beings instead of one. Whether these rumors are true, and if Skythas still lives, remain a mystery.

Of course, all the above are generalizations, and—with the possible exception of the crazed white wyrms—do not stand for all Othlorx of a given color. Anyone who encounters one of the broken dragons should be aware that he is dealing with an individual, whose personality may be quite different than one might expect from reading this or other texts about them. As Bragor said, the only certainty when confronting an Othlorx is the need for caution.

Bragor theorized that the changes in the Othlorx would continue indefinitely, as Erestem's curse continued to alter their bodies and minds. Not long after his disappearance, however, the Godless Night ended and Erestem herself was slain. While some debate that this has no effect on the Othlorx curse, it is my belief that, with the goddess' death, the power of her words is broken. If my guess is correct, the curse is no more.

What this means for the Othlorx is a question that only the passage of time is apt to answer. Will they remain as they are, but no longer decline? Will the dragons return to their old glory? Add to this the rumors of a vast purge of dragons in Ansalon during the Night, and the possibility also exists that some of Taladas's dragons will depart to fill the void there. The future is highly uncertain, and may not be known for decades—or centuries—to come.

The Phaethon

Cultural and Religious Practices During and After the War of the Lance

Presented on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Lord Galsworth uth Minton, rector of the College of Anthropology, University of Tarsis, at the Symposium of Ansalonian Cultural Studies, on the 23rd day of the month of Yurthgreen, 380 AC.

Presented by Fulbright Ak Farshoon, Mayor of Lantern Township, and Heather Alind-Say, Aesthetic.

Transcription of the speech follows.

Honored guests, scholars, and patrons, we thank you for attending the birthday celebration of Lord Galsworth uth Minton. As we all know, his dedication and devotion to the path of racial scholarship has created a vast new world of understanding and empathy for the various peoples of Ansalon. Indeed, without his years and years of hard work, the Draco-Dwarven Ale Wars would still be progressing in mead halls, inns, and rest houses across the continent. So it is in his honor that I present to you the cultural and religious practices of the Phaethon during the War of the Lance. Some of you in the audience may remember that it was a very young Lord Galsworth who led the Solamnic diplomatic delegation to meet with the Phaethon after their dramatic entrance into the war in the Spring of 352, so we in the department felt that it would be properly celebratory to document that culture and the environment that gave rise to this historic meeting.

Background on the Phaethon Culture

The Phaethon, as we know, are an offshoot of the Kagonesti elves. Their legends say that they are descended from the Kagonesti elf Phaetholos, said to be the son of Habbakuk and an unspecified elven woman. Phaethalos's tribe were deeply religious, and moved with him to the heights of the Khalkists to a spiritual commune, where they dedicated their lives to the Phoenix God's service. These early elves kept no written records, and minimized contact with outsiders and nonbelievers, so we have no way of knowing when or how their transformation occured. Indeed, the first mention of the Phaethons as we know them now—fiery wings and all—comes from a Qualinesti merchant's travel log dated about 150 years after the end of the Kinslayer War, where he mentions that one of his underlings disappeared from guard duty near the border of Silvanesti and Blode. The merchant sent out a search team that discovered the missing guard a day later, and found him nearly mad, raving about elves with wings of fire.

Soon afterwards, the Phaethon made contact with the leaders of Silvanesti and Qualinesti, and established documented colonies in the Khalkist and Kharolis mountains, though stopped short of opening full diplomatic ties with either elven nation, seemingly for fear of religious persecution. The Qualinesti cleric Halanthalas visited a Phaethon village near Thorbardin some 1500 years later, and recorded that "these bird-men, supposedly blessed by Blue Phoenix himself, worship no gods that civilized people would recognize. Their worship centers around a pagan fire, and some nonsense about the eternal cycle of life. When told about the wonders of E'li and the true gods of the elves, these backwards heathens merely shrugged and ignored the teachings! They are no better than humans, or Kagonesti." Needless to say, the Phaethon cut off contact with the elven nations soon after that, and indeed their westernmost colonies all but vanished.

The next time the Phaethon enter recorded history is during the time of the War of the Lance, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. First, let us discuss the lifestyle and habits of the Phaethon, to provide proper context for the heart of our discussion.

Phaethonic Life

Every aspect of Phaethon life is dictated in their scripture, the *Tasthala-Shastra*. This document was said to have been recited by the three main aspects of the Phoenix (the spiritual center of their religion)—Phaenar the Risen, Sirithos the Flame, and Kinthalos the Fallen, and recorded by Tasthalan, a dedicated monk and scribe. His work, meant to be read, memorized, and recited in religious ceremonies, is a masterpiece of poetry, full of musical notations, memorization cues, and distinct sections and voices that would put any work by the great bards of Ergoth to shame. Even now, hearing the words of the *Tasthala-Shastra* sung are enough to move even the most hardened to tears. Indeed, during the early era of the empire of Istar, portions were routinely sung during the ceremonies dedicated to Habakkuk. During his inquisition, Revered Son Shambo of Taol said that, "though you may flay the skin off my bones, and string me up like a Blödean sausage, I shall swear before the most holy that there is no greater scripture than that professed by our winged brothers in

the name of their flame." Sadly, almost all of the translated versions of this text were destroyed in the aftermath of that session.

The content of the work is even more interesting. It spells out how to lay out a Phaethonic village, down to the dimensions of the buildings, and which direction entrances should face, and how best to farm the land and rotate crops. All Phaethon villages are designed according to this text, with entrances that face the sunrise, and homes in the form of narrow, onion-domed spires. The temples, which are the focal point of the village, are remarkable. They are square, open-air pavilions, with a square, three-step fire altar in the center. Above the altar is a giant, elaborately carved pyramid-like tower, decorated with images of the gods and other spiritual symbols. This tower is also hollow, with a hole at the peak for the smoke of the fire to escape. Visitors coming to the village see these towering cupolas from miles away, often as their first glimpse that there is a settlement near by. During the final battles of the War of the Lance over the Khalkist Mountains, Knights of Solamnia would often wing over these temples while flying on dragonback, as the towers would poke through the tops of the cloudbanks, and offer a stunning glimpse at the gods. Knights found these vistas to be incredibly calming and fortifying, and found that their minds were eased before their highly pitched battles.

Surrounding the main temple plaza are various buildings dedicated to arts and craftsmanship. As part of their religious beliefs, all Phaethon learn a creative skill, either in music, or arts, or drama, or some other form of expression, and practice it in addition to their normal duties. Because the culture is isolated from the world, these requirements become vital to their lifestyles, as the only pots, the only clothes, the only furniture, and so on, come from other Phaethon who have trained in that skill. Indeed, many of those Phaethon who are found outside of their communities work as artisans and architects, though this has slowed to a trickle in the years following the Cataclysm.

Phaethonic homes are removed from the central town-square area, often on the sides of mountain peaks, closer to the farm valleys where the winged elves work during the daytime. These homes are always on the sunrise side of the mountain, and rise up like mushroom stalks from the cliff sides. The towers, generally two or three stories tall, are all built in roughly the same style, based on the directions of the *Tasthala-Shastra*—entrances face the west, with a sitting room and kitchen below, and bedrooms above, surmounted by an onion-style dome. Those families graced with a *Verda* elder have their third floor converted to an open-air terrace, for the elder to come and go as they please. Furniture in these homes is made in the various craft centers in the town.

Indeed, Phaethonic architecture was rather widely known in ancient times, especially in the south of Ansalon, near the now-abandoned Kharolian colonies. The merchant-queens of Kharolis summoned the master architects of the Phaethon and had them design and build the new capital city of Tarsis, as well as some of the more outlying cities, such as Lantern and Twendle. The spiraling minarets and soaring towers of these southern cities owe their existence to the *Tasthala-Shastra*, and we have extensive records from Kharolis backing these claims, especially from the diaries of Queen Kalina, who took the Phaethon master artist Atisha as her lover and close confidant during the early stages of the second war with Ergoth.

The valleys below these homes are fertile farmlands, where the Phaethon grow garlic, onions, leeks, and other root vegetables, as well as squash, wheat, and lentils. Other pastures are dedicated to goat and sheep farming, as other livestock can't survive well in the climate. Phaethonic food tends to lean heavily on hearty stews cooked in clay pots, and roasted meats cooked in stone ovens that keep the heat locked within. A standard preparation involves taking chunks of lamb, coating them in yogurt and spices, and skewering them, before placing them into the oven for lengthy periods of time. This is then eaten wrapped in soft unleavened bread. More interesting, however, is the food eaten during funeral rituals. A whole goat is prepared and buried in a clay-lined pit, and a fire is built above it, and allowed to burn down to coals and ashes, before being covered again. The meat is then cooked by the residual heat, representing the cycle of life, with the soul (represented as heat) living on despite the ashen residue of fallen life.

Far removed from the core of the village is the monastic pavilion of Sirithos. Here, orders of martial monks embrace the chaotic and dynamic tenets of Sirrion, unlike the intensely disciplined monks of Majere. They train their bodies to attack and defend in beautifully fluid forms, with emphasis on creative reaction. While there is a unified core skill set to be learned in this martial art, the chaotic flame shows through in individual practice, as each student is expected to evolve and develop the art in his or her own unique fashion. The most adept fighters eventually break off and form their own schools, thus ensuring that the art remains fresh.

Phaethonic People

Each community is led by a small group of elders known as *Verda.* These are Phaethon who, after a certain age, are divinely inspired to fly to spectacular heights, generally on clear nights while Solinari is in high sanction, and come back to the village changed. Their hair, normally reddish or brownish, is now shocking white, and their wings go from

the reddish orange of a simple campfire to the whitish-blue of a blazing hot forge. These Phaethon become aloof and solitary, often spending lengthy periods of time in meditation, in far off hermitages on barren cliffsides. They are highly respected within their community for their vast wisdom and knowledge, and their longevity, which is some three to four times as long as the average Phaethon. These elders make the decisions for the village, and assign young Phaethons to their chosen art forms and occupations, after consulting with augurs and mystic signs. One elder from each village is then assigned to represent the village in the grand meetings of all Phaethon tribes, which happens once every hundred years or so, barring events like the War of the Lance.

Under this council of elders, the town is divided into the various craft groups, as well as a separate group for teachers of the basic arts of language and life skills. Each Phaethon starts in these basic life classes from their fifth to their fifteenth years, at which point they are assigned to their craft groups. Every Phaethon also spends part of the week tending to their fields, and a few weeks in the spring and autumn are dedicated to the seeding and harvesting.

Two more groups are worth notice—the Phaenar paladins and the Shadows of Sirithos. The Phaenar are an elite subgroup of the clerics of Phaeron, the Phoenix Risen. These holy warriors are the first line of defense for the Phaethon villages, and organize training exercises for the milita, consisting of all able-bodied Phaethon past the age of twenty. The Phaenar are instantly visible in the village, wearing bright blue tabards embroidered with the emblems of a phoenix rising from a fire. Most striking, however, are their wings, a bright vivid shade of blue, transformed after completing the rites of passage into the holy order. Phaenar carry a halberd as a sign of their position, and are well trained in aerial combat.

The all-female Shadows of Sirithos are another matter entirely. Best termed a "mystery cult," the Shadows function as village historians, storytellers, and lorekeepers. The sorority formed in the years following the cataclysm to preserve Phaethon lore and tradition in the absence of the priestly class. Beyond tending to the fires of the gods and maintaining the daily records of the villages, these women also took on the functions of soothsayers, entering into long trances and offering mystical advice and cautions to the village elders. These trances were couched in mystery, as these women were said to peer into the realm of shadows, and see what the eternal flame of Sirithos had written there. The most experienced of these maidens (all unmarried and devoted to the art from the moment they were chosen) were said to have shadow companions who followed them around, and indeed, could travel through the shadows themselves, though this was never verified. Indeed, the only indication that they were different from the rest of the populace at all came in the form of their wings, which manifested as wisps of smoke and ash. These women had a huge impact on the decision of the Phaethon to enter the war, which leads to the heart of this discussion—their religion and its impact on the War of the Lance.

The Religion of the Phaethon

To discuss the gods of the Phaethon is to discuss the history of the Phaethon, which is to say that one cannot be discussed without being intricately tied to the other. That said, we will endeavor to talk about the rituals and religious behaviors of the Phaethon first, as it frames the final discussion.

Those of us raised in the Istaro-Solamnic church of Elistan are familiar with a pantheon of 21 gods and goddesses, segmented into their moral factions by the sevens. The Phaethon approach their idea of divinity in a vastly different manner. For them, the gods are merely aspects of a singular all-encompassing spiritual essence known as the Phoenix. Phaethon ritual worship revolves around the phases of what is called the "Phoenix Cycle." These phases can be equated to our own gods, but the Phaethon do not focus on such distinctions. As their creation myths speak of descent from Habakkuk, known to the ancient elves as the Phoenix Lord, we must assume that the Phoenix Cycle is a later theological development, growing outwards to encompass the full pantheon within its symbolism.

The first phase of this cycle is Phaenar, the Phoenix Risen. Newly born of the eternal fire, this aspect represents hope, vitality, vigor, and a connection to nature and rebirth. In Istaran theology, this is Habakkuk, and his worship is the dominant force in Phaethon religion. Newly born children are consecrated in ceremonies honoring the Risen Lord, and the planting season is dedicated to him as well. His icon is a phoenix half-risen from a flame.

Following is Kelos, the Phoenix Ascendant. This is the Phoenix at peak energy, filled with strength and power, and revitalizing the natural world. Prayed to during harvest times, and during weddings and other spiritually important moments, the Phoenix Ascendant is Chislev, the mother of nature and the hearth. Her symbol is a phoenix surmounted by a circle representing the sun.

Third is Zurar, the Phoenix Descendant. The Phoenix is aging, and fading quickly into nonbeing, with dulling colors and darkened flames. This is Zeboim the crone, and the recipient of sacrifices and ceremonies to pray for protection from health related issues. This aspect is highly respected and feared by the Phaethon, as it controls the storms and winds, which are vital to the safety and survival of winged beings. The final rites of the dead are conducted in the name of Zurar, and Phaethons are washed in

specially prepared seawater before their entombment. This aspect is a phoenix in darkened blues and blacks, with aged features and drooping feathers.

Fourth is Kinthalos, the Phoenix Fallen. Kinthalos is the remains of a phoenix after death; the smouldering ashes of leftover emotions: rage, anger, and jealousy—all of the things the dead leave behind. From the name, we can tell this is Sargonnas, the fiery anger. When the Phaethon gird themselves for battle, they dedicate themselves to Kinthalos, and anoint themselves in ashes and soot, leaving their lives behind and venturing forth as the dead, with nothing but rage to sustain themselves.

Finishing the cycle is Sirithos the Flame, or the neutral lord Sirrion. The only aspect of the Phoenix to not actually be a phoenix, the Flame is the beginning and ending of all things, and the core to any Phaethonic ceremony. All rituals and prayers begin with an invocation to the flame, and end with a ceremonial extinguishing—as the beginning and end of the cycle, the shadows are just as important as the light. The flame is the creative, artistic, primal energy that drives all life, and gives heat to living bodies. The Phaethon also use the flame as a divination tool and spiritual guide.

As mentioned earlier, each settlement has a temple structure dedicated to these gods. The fire altar is the center of each temple, while the four sides are each dedicated to an aspect—east to the Risen, north to the Ascendant, west to the Descendant, and South to the Fallen. Each area has an open space in front of a very stylized representation of the iconic aspect, to be used for ceremonial purposes and special events. The only altar that is continually staffed and displayed is the core fire altar in the center. While most Phaethon are dedicated to Phaenar, the other aspects each have a very small priesthood dedicated to their service. These clerics go from village to village when needed for ceremonial purposes, and otherwise maintain their homes in their core temples on isolated peaks. Village temples keep one local priest on hand for lesser ceremonies and such. These priests tend to wear robes of saffron orange with dark maroon highlights.

And yet, you may be wondering how such an isolated race joined the War of the Lance. Thus far, all of the information we've presented is so-called 'standard reference material', that is to say, information freely available from libraries such as this one and the Great Library in Palanthas. In the course of our research, my team and I have discovered that this Phaethon culture is not the only culture out there. Indeed, there is a separate culture, with entirely different religious beliefs, a schism from the core of the race. We will discuss these differences in the course of our main discussion on the history of the Phaethon and their entrance in the war.

History

As we stated at the beginning, the origins of the Phaethon are shrouded in myth and the mists of time. We know that their progenitor was the Kagonesti elf Phaetholos, and we know that he is said to be the son of an aspect of Habbakuk. There is no way of knowing when he was born, or where, but early elven records show his name appearing on the rolls of the elves at the original Sinthal-Elish council. He joined with Kaganos and the wilder tribes, and disappeared from Silvanesti records. Kagonesti oral histories tell of his tribe, the Skyfishers, and their metaphoric flight (as they didn't have wings just yet) into the foothills of the Khalkists during the battles of elven pacification during the reign of Speaker Silvanos. This much we can verify, from the personal diaries of General Balif, as well as war records from Silvanost. From this point on, we have only the records of the Phaethon themselves, as written in the *Tasthala-Shastra* and other clerical histories.

It is important to remember that these original elves were entirely wingless when they took off for the foothills of the Khalkists. The *Shastra* speaks of these earliest days with a sense of awe, as it describes the trials and perils of the young tribe hiding in ogre lands, away from both the High Ogres who lived in Takar at the time, and the armies of Silvanos trying to unify the elves by force. The holy text speaks of the prayers of the Skyfishers to the Phoenix Lord, appealing to his sense of mercy and love for his son. In here, we learn that the tribe was cornered into a small canyon in the Khalkist mountains, with the elven armies on the south and the High Ogre slavers to the north. The *Shastra* states, in translation, "And see the skies as they open wide, the arms of the Phoenix descend//and lift the children, each lost child, whose fear and concern come to end."

The tribe of Skyfishers was no more, and the Phaethon were born. They fled to the high peaks of the mountains, away from ogres and dwarves alike, and built their first villages among the nests of dragons. The earliest records say that perhaps 100 to 150 Phaethon were part of that initial community, and that they established their caste system as a means of organized survival. These records, incidentally, were kept in early Nestari, or High Elven, and the gods and names were all resoundingly Silvanesti, indicating that Phaethonic linguistic shifts had yet to occur.

Around a thousand years later, the Phaethon had multiplied and spread to a number of villages throughout the high Khalkists. Somehow they had managed to avoid the notice of all of the land bound races nearby and develop into a very stable society. Indeed, it can be said that their civilization has changed almost insignificantly since that point, but for one disturbance whose reprecussions are felt to this day.

Around the time that Sithas and Kith Kanan were attaining their majority, there was a huge burst of religious development among the Phaethon. Their theologians and scholars had written many texts on the nature of the gods and the path of souls, and indeed, our modern theologians are only now realizing many of their insights today. It was in this atmosphere that the great Phaethonic priest Vibhavas Granthe started his ministry. Granthe preached that mortals did not need to worship the gods, nor derive power from them. He said that the cycle of life was a trap, and that the gods themselves were eternally bound to their fixed position in the cosmic machine. Rather than go through the motions of worship and ritual for the sake of ritual, Granthe suggested that people instead seek their own path through the gate of souls, using the gods as examples rather than objects of worship.

This, of course, was shocking and extreme, especially in a society so intrinsically built around the worship of the gods. What Granthe said was revolutionary and heretical all in one. The other priests and *Verda* elders demanded he recant or be cast out. What happened next was nothing short of miraculous. At his trial in the high temple of Sirithos, Granthe refused to recant. The priests ceremoniously stripped him of his rank and, through a holy ritual, of his divine powers. Granthe laughed, and said (according to the *Shastra*), "The powers of the gods are as illusionary as the gods themselves. You delude yourselves by implying that there is only one true way to salvation, and only one true way to power. In my meditations, I have discovered another way. A lonely way. A way of summoning the divine spark that gives us all life, that gives our very world life. Your hollow rituals can never take that away from me."

The priests, infuriated by this blasphemy, tried to kill the heretic through means unrecorded, yet they failed each time. In the end, Granthe and his followers were banished from the high peaks of the Khalkists, and told to make their way on their own. Granthe's followers, who became known as Vibhavasists, formed a splinter community of Phaethon in the Kharolis mountains. There, they established home villages that were remarkably similar to their old homes, save for one thing: The temple. Vibhavasist temple complexes are remarkably simple affairs—where the god temples feature rich carvings and multi-tiered pyramidal towers, the Vibhavas temples were bell-shaped spires, with large circular bases and very narrow points. At the very center of the temple was the holy fire, surrounded by mats for meditation. The worshippers had no rituals, but were encouraged to meditate on the fire and discern their inner souls. The monks led seminars on how best to attain the Oneness, as they called it.

No Vibhavasist was ever recorded as having divine powers, and yet, their society survived and thrived. Slowly over time, older Phaethonic traditions found their way into the culture, and the Shadows of Sirithos became enmeshed in these communities as well, despite their ties to the gods. Here, these priestesses functioned as healers and midwives as well as record keepers.

Periodically, the two groups would meet again to discuss issues of greater import to the race at large, but these meetings almost always ended with sectarian anger. When the Cataclysm struck, and the gods all departed, the Vibhavasists could not help but gloat. Their faith had no gods, afterall, and was not damaged by their lack of presence. The records make no note of what happened to the Shadows of Sirithos, but as their religious practices were mysteries to the populace at large anyway, it is likely that the recoders chose not to disturb that image.

The Cataclysm was very rough on the Phaethon. Without gods, many of these highly religious people turned to the Vibhavasist way of life, and kept their faith through meditation. A few ancient *Verda* kept the old fires burning, however, and refused to have anything to do with the splinter sect. Slowly but steadily, the race was disappearing into obscurity.

Two things changed this, and brought the Phaethon back into limelight. The first is an apocryphal visit to a Vibhavasist village by Hero of the Lance Tasslehoff Burrfoot. While we cannot verify that this visit actually occured the way the kender told the story, we have Phaethonic records stating that a young kender calling himself "Lipsmacker Droolbucket, the crown prince of Solamnia" showed up about twenty years before the War of the Lance started. This fits with the stories told by the hero Burrfoot, though we cannot verify that he was indeed hunting after a cult worshipper of Hiddukel. This was, however, the first foreign visit to a Phaethon settlement in close to two thousand years.

News of this spread through the entire community, along with word of vast changes in the political landscape. Phaethon elders started making patrols of their home territories, seeing the massive build-ups in the plains of Neraka. The highest peaks, where dragons once reigned, were seeing signs of activity for the first time in hundreds of generations. This was incredibly troubling to the Phaethon tribes.

Secondly, the holy sisters of Sirithos started having visions again, for the first time since the Cataclysm. The spirits told that a great calamity would befall the world and lead to the end of the Phaethon people, were the tribes not to join together again. Over the next twenty years, the tribes slowly rebuilt their connections with each other, and slowly started to speak again. And then the gods returned.

This was a momentous occasion for the traditional (now called Cyclist) Phaethon. Their temple altars all burst into flames at once, and the Phoenix Risen called out to his priests and paladins to gird up for battle, to try to save the ancient elven home of Silvanesti. The Vibhavasists were

persuaded finally to discuss the war and the future, and agreed to meet with the Cyclists in the original Phaethon settlement, a ruin consisting of little more than a pavilion dedicated to the gods. Here, the two sides set forth to finally bring an end to their quarrels.

Two thousand years of dogmatic differences kept these people apart, and two thousand years of cold shoulders and disdain were not released easily. The Cyclists chose Lethis Phoenixborn as their speaker, while the Vibhavasists had Kintheva as theirs. The two squared off in the sacred hall of Sirithos, in the winter of 352, and brought their disagreements to a head.

Said Kintheva, "What need we this land-born war? We live on the loftiest heights, and are untouched and unbothered by the groundlings. They live their lives in ignorance and inevitability, seeking nothing more than the next distraction from their meagre existences, and are trapped eternally in their emotions and desires. There is no hope for enlightenment, no desire to better themselves, no will to free themselves from the binds of the material existence. How can we possibly help such a people?"

Replied Lethis, "Our purpose, kinsman, is to lead the way. Truth must be taught if the landed are to learn the way to their own salvation. It is our duty as those who know to free them from the bonds that hold the mortal races from the knowledge of the gods and the oneness."

Said Kintheva, "The gods? You speak of the gods? They have not even been around for hundreds of years, and yet these mortals fight in their name! They know not what they believe, nor do they know why they believe it. True freedom comes from self-realization, not from empty slogans and endless battles. We have no justification to fight this Dragonqueen anyway."

Replied Lethis, "Why do we fight against the Dragonqueen? Look at her as a temple of illusion. The idol inside represents Cunning; a sly craftiness meant to delude and enslave. Her priest is Deception, offering prayers to conceal her true ways behind a veil of gifts. The temple's blessed reward is Sorrow, for that is what you get when you pray to the illusion of evil. From afar, you see the steeple of this temple, the Ego that binds souls to this reality, and atop that steeple, the flag of arrogant conceit. We fight her, my brothers, because we must free the people from the grasp of this illusion, and show them the path of righteousness. If you wish to sing the praise of self, then do so, but realize that there is no greater sin in this world than allowing another to wallow in ignorance. Even your Granthe believed that."

Said Kintheva, "You speak well, Cyclist, enough to make me believe that you've truly attained realization yourself. We will join you in this struggle, but not as combatants. I bow before your rhetorical talent."

Replied Lethis, "No, brother, it is I who must bow to you. For taking the step toward bringing our people together speaks louder than any paltry words that I say."

Together, Lethis and Kintheva assembled a council of war, where it was decided that the Cyclist regiments would fight, while the Vibhavassts would perform support duties. The combined Phaethon army, while few in number, acquitted itself well in the evacuations of Silvanesti, and even as a support regiment for the battles against the Red Dragonarmies in Neraka and Sanction. Lord Galsworth witnessed the actions of this regiment, and has written in much detail about the battles they fought.

After the War, the Cyclists and Vibhavasists still maintain separate religious traditions, even if most of their culture has normalized. Perhaps, in the coming years, we may learn more of this reclusive if spiritually enlightened culture, and ponder on what they might have to teach us. Thank you for listening, and Happy Birthday, Lord Galsworth.

Notes on Solamnic Feasting

By Jarrus Locastus, Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthus

Recently my old friend John Trowbridge asked if I would gather information for him about what usually happens at a Solamnic feast. A merchant by trade, John supplied weapons to the knights during the War of the Lance. In fact, he continued to provide them with quality armaments even after their knightly coffers ran low on funds. And now that the war is over, in grateful recognition of his assistance, he was invited to attend a feast in honor of Knight Grand Master Gunthar Uth Wistan. My friend asked me if I would do a little research into feasting for him and then summarize what he could expect, so that he could better fit in with the gentry and avoid making embarrassing blunders.

Even though music is my usual field of study, I was happy to help my friend with this task. I've always been a little curious about Solamnic traditions and I presumed my access at the Library would make it easy for me to gather the information he required. So I immediately started searching for citations and reference materials. I had no idea there'd be such a dearth of information! Beyond the mention that this feast or that feast occurred (and sometimes a note about who attended and what was the reason for the celebration) details are incredibly rare. For example, there appears to be very little documentation about proper etiquette, standard procedures, or even typical menus for something so basic to Solamnic society. Upon reflection, I suppose this is because most Solamnics take for granted that everyone who needs to know already knows the traditions. After all, Solamnic society has been relatively closed to outsiders since the Cataclysm.

Thus, having scanned several texts, having questioned my Solamnic colleagues, and having consulted with a chef & chamberlain, I've come up with the following notes on the subject. I include it here with the hope that this information, initially gathered for my friend, may be of use to others as well.

Solamnic Tradition

As most everyone knows, the word "feast" is commonly used across Ansalon to denote a large meal with a festive atmosphere. For example, someone might say, "We feasted at the Shadow Dragon Inn," or "We attended a birthday feast for Rhom Jelek." However, in Solamnia the word feast also denotes a very formal type of celebration with standardized rituals that date back hundreds of years. A Solamnic feast or "Grand Feast" as it is sometimes called, is a highly structured meal, infused with the formal hierarchy that characterizes the knighthood. While the food at a Solamnic feast is important and impressive, it is actually the pomp and circumstance of the event—(especially the formal seating arrangements and the standardized order of the proceedings)—that differentiates a Solamnic feast from other food-related gatherings. Although the stated purpose of the Solamnic feast is a celebration of a current event or special person, always present in the background is a second purpose—the affirmation of ancient Solamnic society and its traditions. In fact, the role a person plays at a feast tends to mirror the role he plays in Solamnic society. On the surface, attendees gather together in their best clothes, eat the best food, mingle with the cream of their society, and act on their best behavior. Below the surface, ancient traditions govern who enters the feast first and last, who sits at the head table, and even who is served first. With its social implications and ancient traditions, a feast is much more structured and complicated than, say, a banquet.

By design, the Solamnic Feast is such a magnificent and preparation-heavy event that it is reserved as a celebration of special occasions and highly important guests. Examples of extraordinary events celebrated with a feast include: weddings uniting two Solamnic households, newly awarded knighthoods, completed quests, well-fought battles, national holidays, and the rare visit of a high-ranking Lord Knight or hero. With all the associated rituals, a Solamnic feast can easily last more than 4 hours and may well go on into the night.

Other, less extraordinary events that may be marked with a banquet (but would lack the formal structure of a feast) include: birthdays, the rare wedding where either the bride or groom is not of Solamnic descent, visits from distant family members, visits from neighbors and friends, visits from mid-level fellow knights, masquerades, and funerals or births.

Preparations for the Event

Because it is such a significant event, a Solamnic feast requires at least a week or two of advance planning if it is to flow smoothly. Oftentimes, the day-to-day organization of the castle will be completely turned upside down in order to prepare. For example, extra sleeping accommodations must be arranged for out-of-town visitors. Depending on the number of guests, this may require a massive shifting of personal belongings from room to room. The castle's normal inhabitants may find themselves (and their personal effects) relocated into servants' rooms to make space for important guests and the servants (and their stuff) may get shuffled down into storerooms or outbuildings for the duration. In addition, extraordinary preparations must also be made in the stables to accommodate the influx of visitors' horses, carriages & their associated entourages. Then of course, triple the normal amount of banquet food (including rare and unusual delicacies) must be acquired and prepared for the three separate sections of the feast. And to handle all the arrangements, temporary staff (in addition to those usually needed around the castle), must be hired and trained and supplied with the proper livery or costume.

Most affluent Solamnic families tend to rely on the highest-ranking servant or Chamberlain to oversee all the details. Once a feast is announced, the host family may then focus on their own personal arrangements, such as preparing new costumes, writing speeches or studying the ancient dance steps. The Chamberlain may in turn divide up the tasks and assign mid-level servants to take charge while he keeps a watchful eye over everything. However, among more modest Solamnic families, the Lady of the House may choose to supervise the preparations herself, assigning the Chamberlain to hands-on tasks such as guest liaison and overseer of the hall. It is also somewhat of a tradition for the Lord of the Household to lead his knights and several of his retainers on a hunt for wild game in the days before the feast. This may serve the dual purpose of gathering meat for the feast as well as removing these men from underfoot while the castle is being prepared.

By necessity a feast typically takes place in the biggest room in the castle. Although Solamnic Great Halls are often magnificently filled with banners, tapestries, family crests, mottos, portraits, and even ancient suits of armor, during a feast the hall may sport new decorations made especially for the occasion. For example, if the feast is to celebrate an honored Lord Knight or hero, the existing family décor may be placed in storage and the hall re-decorated with banners, tablecloths and garlands in the honored person's heraldic colors. For wedding feasts, the usual colored banners and cloths may be replaced with white linen and lace. Or, sometimes the marriage of two important houses will be symbolized with newly made banners in the heraldic colors of both families. In the winter there may be pine boughs spread throughout; in summer there may be bouquets of fresh flowers and sweetly scented herbs that have been gathered shortly before the event.

So important is the location of the feast that one of the most competent servants is often assigned the single task of overseeing the room before and during the event. Called the Hall Steward, one of his jobs is to make sure the tables are pre-set in the correct layout. Some Solamnic feasts call for a U-shaped arrangement of tables so that guests sit in a ring, with presentations and entertainments occurring in the center. Larger feasts may be set up with tables arranged in straight rows. The head table is often placed nearest the fireplace, on a dais, facing the center of the room. A wide gap is usually left in front of the head table (for presentations), and then as many lesser tables as are needed can be arranged in rows facing the gap. Of course, the least important guests will find themselves seated in the rows farthest from the center.

On the day of the feast the Hall Steward sees to the comfort of the mid-level guests who are first to arrive. He also makes certain that all guests are made aware of the seating charts, so that the most honored guests, last to enter, do not find lesser guests already seated in all the best locations. Of course, he must direct the guests with tact and courtesy so that everyone is treated with deference to their station and no one is made to feel slighted. On the rare occasion when minor squabbles occur (for example, when good friends find themselves seated at different tables) it is the Hall Steward's duty to smooth things over or to summon an authority figure who can avoid an altercation. Finally, once the food service begins, the Hall Steward announces the menu and watches over all the servers to make certain that food and drink are presented smoothly and that no guest is left wanting.

With the Hall Steward managing the room and the servers, the Head Cook is free to focus solely on food preparation. The Head Cook's job often begins weeks in advance when the menu is planned and submitted for approval. Ingredients that can't be bought locally may require a shopping excursion to a neighboring city. Arrangements must also be made for large numbers of fish to be caught and kept fresh. At least three times the wild game of a normal hunt must be brought down and prepared. In order to keep the meat at its freshest it is considered best to schedule a hunt as close to the feast as possible, taking into account that sometimes the hunters may have a hard time or an unlucky hunt. A cook may plan for venison and end up with wild boar instead.

Only after the ingredients have been arranged can the cooking actually begin. The cooking alone may take a week and may require extra kitchen space or even construction of an outdoor fire pit. Breads and dishes with heavy sauces

can often be prepared days ahead of time and set aside. But just prior to the event the kitchen will be bustling all day and night in order to handle the extra load. On the morning of the feast it is not unusual to find a kitchen fire crowded with several kettles hung above and several roasting spits placed in front. Even so, timing everything so that it is ready to serve all at once is a monumental task, worthy of mention. On occasion the Head Cook may actually be brought out at the end of a successful feast for a well-deserved acknowledgement of the Huma-esque effort.

Order of Events

On the day of the event, guests of mid-level social rank may be expected to wait together in a small hall or antechamber—especially if they arrive before the Great Hall opens. When socializing with each other, Solamnic tradition dictates that guests nod their heads in a slight bow when greeting someone of higher status. It is considered a social blunder to neglect this small courtesy when meeting a person of higher social rank. It is also considered a generous gesture, with no loss of status, to exchange a slight bow of the head with those of lower social rank. Although formal bowing and curtseying is not required, those who wish to make a large impression often do so with great flourish.

In addition to being on their best behavior, everyone in attendance will be wearing their most impressive clothing: the feast provides a chance to present oneself at one's best. Lush colorful fabrics with elaborate trim over bleach-white linens are the normal attire. Most dress to impress, keeping in mind that oftentimes marriages are proposed and family alliances are strengthened through the socializing that occurs at such a gathering. Expect that hair will be well-coifed and neatly trimmed, leather boots and shoes will be polished until they gleam and fancy jewelry will be prominently displayed. Knights often bring their swords sheathed in finely decorated scabbards that detach easily. Non-knights are not allowed to wear weapons at the feast, though they may arrive with swords and hand them to a page to look after. Although rules vary from feast to feast, personal servants are normally not invited into the Great Hall, but must wait in a side hall until the feast is over.

In the antechamber, pitchers of tea or honey-lemon water may be available for guests to drink while they wait. Nearby will also be pitchers of plain water. The plain water is not for drinking; it is placed there near basins and towels to allow each guest to wash up. Since bowls of finger food are shared between people seated next to each other, it is considered good etiquette to make sure one's hands and nails are clean before entering the hall.

About an hour before the event the doors open and guests line up to file in. A herald announces all guests' names as they enter. It is advised that lesser-known attendees have their name and title, or their name and hometown, written on a small piece of paper to hand to the herald just before entering. Heralds have been known to be selective about the wording of such things and may edit as they see fit…unless the introduction is kept simple. An example of a properly written introduction might be "Jonathan Trowbridge of Palanthas, Supplier of Weapons to the Knighthood, Guest of Lord Gunthar." On the other hand, most heralds will decline to read an untruthful or self-aggrandizing introduction such as "Jonathan Trowbridge, Maker of the finest weapons in Ansalon and Lord Gunthar's best friend."

It's generally considered easiest for new guests to make an entrance somewhere in the middle of the group. A few of the lesser nobles will crowd into the hall first so that they can achieve the best seats to which they are entitled. Other members of the nobility linger in the antechamber as long as possible, making certain that the hall will be at its fullest when they make their entrance. Guests that arrive very late, after the hall doors have been closed, are ushered in quickly and without ceremony, so as not to create a fuss. While it is possible for well-connected guests to arrive late by accident, having been delayed on their journey, it is interesting to note that a tardy guest may also be a social outcast or pariah who is trying to work his way back into the good graces of his peers. For example, it is not uncommon to see a dishonored knight, who nonetheless wishes to attend, arrive late on purpose in order to slip in without being announced.

At every place is set a plate-sized slice of coarse-ground bread known as a trencher. Even though the bread is of the kind served at lesser inns and eaten daily by peasants, it is not supposed to be eaten at the feast. In fact, there will be baskets of fine-ground bread and soft butter placed on every table for consumption. Instead, the trencher functions as a plate. This is an unusual tradition that started out of necessity during the hard times following the Cataclysm. Of course Solamnic feast tables could be set with fine porcelain, but over the years, bread plates have become so much a part of Solamnic feasting that many are loathe to give up the custom. In fact bread plates are prepared especially large and thick, just for the occasion. And when each piece of bread soaks up too much grease and juice, watchful servants snatch it up and replace it with a fresh slice. Later that evening all the used bread plates, flavored with meat & sauce from the feast, may be handed out to hungry peasants or, more likely, fed to the host's dogs. In ancient times the practice of sharing bread with the poor was once considered a gesture of kindness toward the less fortunate. Nowadays it is more a time-honored feast tradition than a necessity.

Once the regular guests have arrived there will be a noise signaling that all guests who have not yet done so are to quiet down and take their seats. Sometimes the signal

is a fanfare or trumpet aria; other times it is simply the commanding voice of the herald or chamberlain. After the hall grows quiet the names of those sitting at the head table are announced, one at a time, along with their full title and any awards or special designations they have achieved. The host and his noble guests enter and take their places upon a raised platform (a dais) that puts them a couple feet higher than everyone else in the room. If the guest of honor is a high-level knight or famous war hero, the men in the crowd may choose to stand and salute him with their swords as he enters. At very affluent feasts a choir may sing a Solamnic hymn as the last guest enters the hall. It is not unusual for guests who know the words to sing along, especially at Yule Feasts, though it is by no means a requirement.

At this point, all the members of the head table sit down except for the host. What follows is a short ritual to acknowledge the importance of the knights who are present. The host will then inquire of all the guests, speaking the words in ancient Solamnic, if all three branches of the knighthood are represented at the feast. Shouts of yea always come in unison from the attendees who are knights. Since it is impossible to tell from the group shout which branches are present, the host will then ask the highest-ranking Knight of the Rose to rise and be acknowledged. The highest-ranking Rose Knight will then stand up and walk to the head table. He then draws forth his sword and places it on the dais in front of the host while pledging an oath of solidarity on behalf of his order and the other Rose Knights present. Thus, if an affluent Knight of the Crown hosts a feast, the highest-ranking Rose Knight is symbolically showing that there is no rivalry between the different branches. The host then calls on the highest-ranking Sword Knight and Crown Knight. Sometimes not all of the branches are represented, in which case the host will make a show of placing a ceremonial sword for each missing group.

The ancient ritual completed, the host then formally reminds everyone of the purpose of the feast. What happens next depends on the purpose. If it is a wedding feast, the bride and groom are given their moment in the limelight. If the feast honors a special person that person will be given a chance to speak a few words. On national holidays and Yule Feasts, ancient stories and poems of the season, already well known by everyone, are told once again. If the host is caught up in the moment, his speech could be rather lengthy. Fortunately, during this time it is considered all right to nibble on the fine-ground bread and soft butter, already placed on the table. In fact, the bread has been placed there by long-standing tradition—to help quiet the stomachs of hungry guests who find their meals delayed by overzealous orations from those at the head table.

In ancient times the host always ended his introductory speech by calling on specific gods to look over and bless the feast. Though the practice of giving an invocation fell out of favor hundreds of years ago, recent times have seen a resurgence of the ancient traditions. If an invocation is given, it may be to one or more of the three traditional gods of Good: Paladine, Kiri-Jolith and/or Habbakuk who have long been the patrons of the three orders of Knighthood and are the backbone of the ideals of the Oath and the Measure.

The beginning of the meal is indicated when kitchen servants, dressed in similar outfits, bringing pitchers of rose-scented water, catch basins and towels to the head table. Hands are held over the bowl, and water is trickled over them from the pitcher. The guest then dries his or her own hands on the servant's towel. In ancient times this practice of laving was a more symbolic ceremony whereby the host himself offered the guest of honor, on behalf of the assembled guests, a chance to cleanse his hands while all looked on. It started as a sign of admiration and tribute from the host to main guest. But over many years the practice has changed so that it is now the servants who offer this tribute to all at the head table, while the rest look on.

When all have washed up, servants bring in the first selection of food to the head table with great flourish. Several different dishes are brought out together in what's called "a remove." Several different servers carry each dish of the first remove out into the Hall, one at a time. The servers walk through the middle of the room toward the Heat Table so all can admire the fine presentation. It's a little like a fashion show for the food…and rightly so, for oftentimes the dishes will be magnificent to behold. Cooked geese and ducks will be presented on a platter with garnishes that make it look like the birds are alive and about to swim off the platter. Boars' heads may be cooked, propped up on a platter and decorated to look as if they are ferociously waiting to strike. Upon reaching the centermost spot in the hall, the server pauses while the Hall Steward announces the name of each dish to the populace, using the ancient Solamnic name and then giving a brief description of what it is. The servants then set the dishes on the head table…except for the meat. Meat dishes are placed on a special presentation table to be carved and served with flair. A male servant who specializes in carving will have been specially trained to expertly slice the meat for the head table.

After the head table's food has been presented, the first remove will be brought to the rest of the guests with much less ceremony. Often the first dish brought will be something light and bland as this is thought to help prepare the stomach for the large meal to follow. Meat dishes for those not at the head table will already have been carved and placed on serving platters. It is possible that not all guests will be offered the same types of meat. If, for example only one wild boar was caught in the hunt, then the head table may dine on wild boar, while the rest of the tables may be given beef or venison instead. Fruit and vegetable dishes

may have been cooked days in advance so the ingredients may appear mushy though they are usually heavily spiced and quite tasty. Sliced meat dishes often come covered in flavorful sauces that may help cover over the freshness (or lack thereof) of the meat itself if necessary. Bowls of thick meat stew are often set on the table between people so that each person can fish out chunks with a common spoon. Male diners may be expected to help slice up tougher slabs of meat for the female guests sitting near them. It is also considered acceptable to use one's own personal knife to cut and to stab pieces of meat that are then lifted to one's mouth and carefully strained off the knife with the teeth.

While the bulk of the guests are being served a small ritual often takes place at the head table. It is easy to miss because it is usually achieved without much fuss. Still, it is worth watching for. One of the host's servants will come up to the guest of honor and bow silently. This represents an unspoken offer to taste the guest's food. The offer is almost always declined with a quick shake of the head and sometimes with a gesture of a hand covering the plate. If declined, the servant then goes back into the kitchen without a fuss. However, on the rare occasion where tensions are strained, the host's servant may be expected to actually eat a bit from each food dish to make certain nothing has been poisoned.

Once all the food has been laid out, the Hall Steward will signal the start of the dinner entertainment. During the entertainment, severs usually stay as quiet as possible so as not to distract from the amusement. If the entertainment is particularly good, conversation may be shushed and guests may find themselves speaking to each other in quiet whispers. If the entertainment is something large and physical, like a juggler or a group of acrobats, then the din in the room may become quite loud. The traditional way of signaling a server's assistance is to place an elbow on the table and hold up the index finger as if pointing at the ceiling. A server can bring more drink or more bread, but should never be asked to refill meat or other main course dishes. So, even though a plate of venison may have been quickly emptied with no one getting a second helping, it is important to remember there are always more and better foods coming in the next remove.

A Sample Feast Program

Ancient Solamnic Rituals	Presentation of host & honored guests Acknowledgement of the Knighthood Acknowledgement of the occasion Invocation Laving ceremony Food presentation & carving Food tasting
1st remove	Soppet (leeks poached in wine vinaigrette) Boiled calf's foot jelly molded in heraldic shield shapes Fish chowder Three Cormarye (roast pork) Thirty Capons (male chicken) in black liver sauce, Almond cheese Onion tarts A subtlety of marzipan & sugar shaped like a castle.
Entertainment	Acrobats and a trio of lute players.
2nd remove	Spinach Soup Venison (deer) Lapin (rabbit) in mustard sauce Roast game birds: peacocks, cranes & bittern, Brawn in Peuerade (wild boar dark meat in thick wine sauce) Parsnip pie with figs & raisins A subtlety: Huma & Dragon shaped from hardened sugar. Huma and Dragon shaped Gingerbreads
Entertainment	Jugglers with fire and ax, a choir
3rd remove	Quinces (hard pears) baked in honey and wine, A custard of eggs, honey, almonds and cream cheese Tourteletes in fryture (Honeyed Fig Tarts) Candied Ginger Coriander Confits (sugared spice seeds)
Ancient Solamnic Rituals	Acknowledgement of the Occasion Acknowledgement of the head cook Retrieval of the Knight's swords Departure of the main guests Musical Entertainment

Altogether there are three removes in a feast. The end of the first two removes will be signaled by the presentation of a subtlety—a sculpture made out of sweets and decorated to match the theme of the feast. For example, wedding feasts may include a bride and groom cake with sugar roses. Feasts honoring a hero or knight might include a historical scene created out of colored sugar candy such as Huma and the Dragon. Yule feasts might include a winter scene with white snow frosting or a collection of cakes and tarts decorated to look like ribbon-wrapped gifts. Subtleties can be non-edible, partly edible, or totally edible and are only limited by the artistic skill of the cook or confectioner. Their purpose is to delight and distract the guests while the servants clear away the dishes from the previous remove and set up for the next course. Often the presentation of the subtlety will be accompanied by a story, poem or song about the scene that it depicts.

The third remove typically consists of dessert items, spiced wine and special foods that are believed to aid digestion. The head table is served first. As the platters of food are brought out, the names of the desserts are announced and presented. Near the end of the third remove

the host will stand and signal for the hall to quiet, though eating may continue. The host will once again reference the purpose of the occasion and the honored guests. And, if the meal was particularly well done he may call forth the cook for a brief acknowledgement. The senior Rose, Sword and Crown knights are then called forward, one at a time, to retrieve their swords. And only then, as the feast winds down, are those at the head table given leave to exit the hall. Officially, the feast is now at an end. Once those at the head table have exited it is considered proper for any of the remaining guests to leave the Great Hall if they so choose.

However, most guests do not leave immediately after the feast is over. In fact, it is traditional for the host to provide for some type of musical entertainment in the Great Hall after the feast. Depending on the occasion, the "after feast" may go on long into the night. This is often where the best socializing of the evening takes place. In fact, guests from the head table, after taking a few moments to refresh themselves and spruce up, often return to the hall and join in. On some holidays there may follow group singing of holiday hymns or favorite Solamnic ballads. Other feasts conclude with tables and chairs being pushed aside to make room for Solamnic dances. As the night winds down the host and those officially staying at the castle eventually retire to their assigned rooms. However, the Chamberlain and other servants will make sure that each guest has a place to spend overnight in the castle, perhaps even in front of the fireplace in the Great Hall itself. Of course, it will still be several days after a feast is over until order is restored and life at the castle returns to normal.

Soppet

- 4 leeks, dark green leaves removed
- 1 cup finely diced mixed onions, carrots, tomatoes & celery
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp. black peppercorns
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup water
- herbs: thyme, tarragon, parsley and a bay leaf tied together with string

First, split each leek almost entirely in half lengthwise. Rinse them thoroughly in water. Now place the leeks in a pan with the remaining ingredients on top, and poach on medium heat for 45 minutes. Remove herbs before serving.

Vinaigrette for Soppet

- 2 beets, diced finely
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. shallots
- 3 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- salt to taste

Combine beets, red wine, water, brown sugar and shallots in a pan, and cook them down until they're slightly syrupy. Transfer the cooked mixture to a bowl, and add the vinegar, lemon juice and mustard. Then drizzle in the oil and whisk. Salt to taste. Use this vinaigrette to top the poached leeks.

Calf's Foot Jelly

- 2 calf's feet, split
- 5 cups water
- 3/4 cup sugar
- ground cinnamon
- thin strips orange or lemon peel
- 6 tablespoons fresh orange juice
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 egg whites
- 1/3 cup dry white wine
- 2 egg shells, crushed

The best calves' feet for jelly have had the hair removed by scalding, but are not skinned. Soak the calf's feet in cold water for several hours. Drain, place in a pan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes.

Drain, rinse well and place in a deep saucepan. Add 5 cups of water, making sure the calf's feet are covered. Bring to a boil and skim. Cover pan loosely, reduce heat and simmer for 7 hours, adding water to keep calves' feet submerged if necessary. Pour the liquid through a strainer into a bowl and discard the calf's feet. Refrigerate overnight.

The next day, clean all traces of fat from the surface of the jelly by scraping it with a spoon, then wiping the surface with a cloth that has been dipped in hot water and squeezed out. The smallest bit of fat will eventually render it dull and cloudy.

In a large clean saucepan, warm the jelly over low heat. Add the sugar, a pinch of cinnamon, several strips of orange and lemon peel and the juices.

Beat the egg whites and the white wine together in a large bowl. (Any trace of egg yoke will prevent the jelly from being perfectly clear.) Add the beaten mixture to the jelly. Whisking continuously, add the crushed egg shells. Bring the jelly to a boil. When a thick layer of froth forms on the surface, reduce the heat to very low and simmer the jelly gently for 2 or 3 minutes. Strain into a bowl through a jelly bag or a strainer lined with tightly woven dampened cheesecloth or a tea towel. The liquid should be clear, if not, empty the bag, wash it, put in the jelly and strain again. Once clear you can put it into moulds to congeal, setting them in a cold place. When it is quite firm, wrap a cloth that has been dipped in hot water, round the moulds to make the jelly turn out easily. In winter it may be made several days ahead. In summer it will keep in ice for two days or so.

Rabbit Cooked with Mustard

- 1 large rabbit (3—4 lbs.), cut into serving pieces
- 1⁄2 cup dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1⁄2 cup dry white wine
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 10 cm (4 inch) piece celery stalked with leaves
- two 10 cm (4 inch) pieces leek (green part)
- 1⁄3 cup sour cream
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley

1. Smear rabbit pieces with mustard and season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat 2 tbsp. of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sear rabbit pieces, turning frequently, until rabbit is very crisp, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a platter.
3. Reduce heat to medium and melt remaining 2 tbsp. butter in skillet. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 8—10 minutes.
4. Place the bay leaf, thyme and celery on one piece of green leek. Cover with the remaining piece of green leek. Tie securely with fine string, leaving a length of string attached so that the herb bundle can be easily retrieved.
5. Add wine to skillet and scrape up any browned bits. Return rabbit pieces to the skillet, along with herb bundle. Cover and cook until rabbit is tender, about 35 minutes. Remove the herb bundle.
6. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream and parsley.

Capons with Black Sauce.

Boil the capons in bouillon, cut up into chunks, then sautée in good rendered lard.

Black Sauce:

- capon liver
- anise seed
- grains of paradise (or black pepper if unavailable)
- ginger
- cinnamon
- bread crumbs
- wine vinegar
- butter or animal fat

Cook livers and puree. Add spices, wine vinegar, butter or fat, and breadcrumbs. Bring it to a boil and simmer. Pour it hot over capons.

Brawn en Peuerade

(Wild Boar in a Thick Wine Sauce)

- Red Wine
- Cinnamon sticks
- Cloves (powder)
- Mace
- Pepper
- Small Onions, whole but peeled, & parboiled until just tender
- Dark & fatty meat of wild boar, thickly sliced.
- (or you can substitute dark meat chicken)
- Red food coloring (substituting for Sandalwood)
- Red Wine Vinegar
- Ginger

Place wine in a large pot; add the cloves, mace, cinnamon sticks & pepper. Bring to a boil. Add the parboiled onions; return to a boil. Add the food coloring, vinegar, and meat, return to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Allow to cook until the sauce has thickened and reduced. Remove cinnamon sticks, place in a serving dish and sprinkle ginger on top.

Parsnip Pie

- 10 parsnips (approx.)
- 1/4 cup figs, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. cinnamon (canelle)
- 1 tsp. cloves
- 3 Tbsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. grains of paradise (or black pepper if unavailable)
- 2 Tbsp. sugar

Peel parsnips and cut into long pieces, discarding any woody center parts. Place in boiling water and cook until just tender. Drain and place into a pie crust. Add figs, raisins, and sprinkle with spice powder. Cover with top crust and bake at 350°F until done. Serve cold.

Honeyed Fig Tarts

- Figs
- Saffron
- Powder spice - black pepper, white pepper, cardamom, ginger & clove
- Pastry dough
- Oil
- Honey

Finely dice the figs as small as possible; mix in saffron and powdered spices to taste. Roll out the pastry dough and cut into medium-sized circles. On one pastry circle place a spoonful of figs, then cover with another circle of dough; seal the edges well. Fry in hot oil until lightly browned & crispy; remove from heat and drain. In a pot, heat the honey, skimming off any scum that rises. Brush drained pies with honey. Eat hot or cold.

Candied Ginger

- 1 lb fresh ginger root
- 4 Cups sugar (eventually)
- 1 C water

Peel ginger root and dice small (1/4" or less). In a sauce pan cover ginger with water and bring to a boil, simmer 5 minutes, then drain off the water. Repeat twice more. Drain and remove ginger. Into a clean pan put in 1.5 C sugar and 1 cup water, stir to dissolve and bring to a boil. Add drained ginger and simmer for 5 minutes. Cover and leave overnight. On the next 6 days add 1/4 C sugar each day, bring to a boil and simmer 5 minutes. Continue each day until what remains is ginger flavored sugar crystals and chunks of sugar saturated ginger. Spread it on a cookie sheet and let dry.

Coriander Confits

- 1 jar coriander seeds
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups of granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup finely ground sugar

To make these candied spice seeds, heat 1 cup of water until it boils.

Add 2 cups of sugar to the boiling water while stirring. Keep stirring until the sugar dissolves and almost reaches the soft ball stage. If you want to add flavoring or color, stir it in now. Then remove a little of this sugar syrup into a small warm pan, add some coriander seeds, and stir well to coat. Remove a spoonful of this mixture. Take care that the syrup is hot enough to be workable, but cool enough to be handled. Then roll the spoonful between your thumb and fingers to coat and separate the seeds. Add a little finely ground (but not powdered) sugar and continue rolling until each seed is coated and separated. Some experimentation may be necessary as you're sure to spoil a few the first time you try it.

Ten Reasons Why Kobolds Are Better Than Draconians

By Master Yap Sizzlegizzard, Wizard

To my most honored Captain Kreech, of the 6th Blue Dragonarmy kobold regiment, salutations.

It has come to my attention that our mighty kobold brethren, pressed into service by the Blue Lady and poised to deliver a victory against the vile Solamnics, are experiencing problems of morale. There are rumors that the draconians, the scions of the dragons and agents of the Queen of Darkness, are overwhelming the kobolds in the Blue Dragonarmy with a sense of inferiority and envy. Woe, to the proud sons of kobold-dom!

As you are no doubt aware, I am Magi, and spring from a long line of kobold seers, sages, acolytes, and arcanists, and while I am the first kobold to attain the stature of Wizard, you and your men should feel a sense of relief that my heritage brings a solution. Even as I continue to attempt to persuade the humans and elves of the Conclave of High Sorcery to allow me to pass their Test, I can at the very least take time to draw upon my koboldic prowess to assemble a list of reasons why the troops should lift their snouts high and walk in confidence.

The list follows.

10. Kobolds ride weasels. While draconians may occasionally fly in on dragonback, or under their own power, nothing can compare to the sheer glory and honor of riding a dire weasel, hand-reared by kobold weasel-keepers, and bred for war and skirmish. Many an army has fallen back, or fallen over, or become incapacitated with hysterics and madness, at the grim sight of a weasel charge.

9. Kobolds are much sneakier. Kapak draconianss may think they have stealth and craftiness in the bag, but a kobold can out-sneak, out-hide, and out-wit any kapak.

8. Kobolds are better soldiers. Yes, we are smaller in stature than the draconians, and possibly not as physically gifted as the draconians are. But, war is about the mind, not the body. We are quick-witted, and work better in groups than the draconians do. We seek hierarchies and organization. Many draconians care only about themselves, or pick fights with their commanding officers.

7. Kobolds are well-established. Although the draconians have a home among the Dragonarmies and were provided with training, weapons, armor, and other equipment denied to us, we kobolds have been present on Ansalon since the Age of Dreams. Our bloodlines stretch far back, which is more than anyone can say about the draconians.

6. Kobolds are excellent siege engineers and trap makers. Draconians have, we have heard, a regiment of engineers and bridge builders, claiming that they are experts. Stuff and nonsense! As anybody knows, kobolds were achieving stellar results with traps, castle defenses, catapults, siege towers, tunnel digging, and mining thousands of years ago.

5. Kobolds are not burdened with draconic mind control. As we have seen, a draconian looks upon a dragon with almost supernatural reverence and awe. We kobolds, while casual admirers of the draconic form, and descended from the first servants of the wyrms, always focus on the task at hand. How distracting it must be to march under the banner of the dragons and spend most of one's time sighing and affecting a trancelike state of worship.

4. Kobolds do not have wings. This may sound like a bad thing, but it is not. Without wings, we are less likely to be concerned with wearing specialized armor, or fall prey to vanity in comparison to dragons, or confused for gargoyles.

3. Kobolds are a singular people. While it is true that we have many tribes, and clans, and sub-tribes, and sub-clans, and while it is also true there are the obvious frustrations with the kobolds of the northern Estwilde and their heathen ways conflicting with those kobolds of the Taman Busuk, and the heretic Khurish kobolds, and the thieves and liars of Ergoth, and various others, we are at least all kobolds. Not, for instance, five divisions that turn upon one another when given the chance.

2. Kobolds don't explode when they die. In the unlikely event that one of us falls prey to the monstrous hordes of the Solamnics, elves, dwarves, or the nightmarish gnomes, we shall become a martyr to the cause, not the first of a series of exploding dead.

1. I am a kobold. The draconians have nobody to compare to my august and puissant presence. I wouldn't list this if it were not absolutely true.

Commander Kreech, as you can see, these are but a beginning. I plan on writing a more extensive document when I can find the time between studying the mysterious arts of magic and dealing with petty rivals among the wizards of other races. Such a document will serve to reinforce the appropriate levels of courage, valor, and craft in our kobold troops.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about such matters, feel free to contact me. I am itinerant and must perforce stay as far away as possible from the front lines of the war in the event that Emperor Ariakas notices my magical skill and tries to recruit me for his personal counsel, which I would never do. However, if you happen to speak with the Blue Lady, do pass along my sincerest greetings.

Yours in scaly superiority,
Master Yap

Recipes

My love of good food is no secret to anyone, and while my wife began the War of the Lance as a barmaid she is no stranger to the kitchen. She has worked to collect recipes that represent the cuisine of other races and cultures spread throughout Ansalon. You won't find any of these recipes at that seedy bar, the Trough!

Tika is fond of food that captures the spirit of both the cook and the region from which it came. I've made the supreme sacrifice of personally taste-testing each of these recipes — except for the fruit puffs, which were "borrowed" by Tas before I could get the first bite. We hope that your own experiences are just as delightful, without the intrusions of kender!

Caramon Majere

Proprietor of the Inn of the Last Home

Solanthus Sausage Balls

These tasty meatballs make a great side dish or appetizer, but Solamnic knights favor them as a hearty meal substitute when they're on watch and can't make it to the campfire for dinner.

- 1 lb sausage (hot or medium hot, to taste)
- 1/2 lb grated cheddar cheese (mild or medium sharp)
- 3 c multi-purpose biscuit mix

Mix ingredients in a large bowl. Roll into small balls, about one inch in diameter. Place on a baking sheet and bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until brown.

Makes about 4 dozen.

Pink Lemonade Pie

This dessert is known as a summer favorite in Palanthas, but few know the cool treat's origin. Legend credits a committee of gnomes in Mt. Nevermind for the achievements in organic chemistry which resulted in pink lemon juice and a frothy white dairy concoction with the proper levels of viscosity at both cool and hot temperatures. The resulting amalgam won several awards from the gnomes' highly-respected Guild of Culinary Alchemists and Structural Engineers.

- 1 9-inch graham cracker pie crust
- 1 small can of frozen pink lemonade concentrate, thawed
- 12 fl oz milk
- 1 large container of whipped topping
- 1 can of sweetened condensed milk

Pour lemonade mix, one lemonade can of milk and half of the whipped topping into a bowl. Mix at medium speed for 2 minutes. Pour into pie crust and top with remaining whipped topping. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours; overnight is best.

Serves 6 to 8.

Magic Fudge Sauce—and—Cake

This decadent sauce/cake combination is even more enjoyable when diners learn that it all baked in the same pan. A more delicate version is attributed to chefs of the Elvish aristocracy, but kender receive credit for this dark, rich form. Whichever origin story is told, the dish is rarely served in order to conserve the secret of its miraculous baking process.

- 1 c unbleached flour
- 1/3 c granulated sugar
- 3 1/2 T cocoa
- 2 t baking powder
- 1/4 t salt
- 1/2 c plus 2 T milk (more as needed, adding 1 t at a time)
- 2 T butter or margarine, melted
- 1 c finely chopped pecans, walnuts or almonds (optional)
- 1 c brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1/2 to 3/4 c cocoa, to taste
- 1 3/4 c hot water
- (Dry ingredients can be mixed and held, tightly covered and refrigerated, for up to 24 candlemarks in advance).

Measure flour, granulated sugar, 3 1/2 T cocoa, baking powder and salt into a bowl. Mix thoroughly. Blend in milk and shortening, making certain the batter is moist throughout. If it seems too dry, add milk by teaspoons until the consistency is spreadable with a spatula. Stir in nuts, if desired. Spread into a 2.5 liter oven-safe soufflé dish or an ungreased 9x9x2 pan; the soufflé dish copes better with the bubbling combination as it cooks.

In a separate bowl, stir together the brown sugar and cocoa, eliminating lumps. Pour onto the level surface of batter. Pour hot water over the top (make sure it's really hot!). Bake at 350° for 45 to 60 minutes. During baking, the cake will rise to the top and the sauce will settle to the bottom. When you insert a toothpick to test the dessert's doneness, do so shallowly into the cake surface; if the toothpick reaches the sauce level, it will never emerge clean. Serve immediately upon removing from the oven, taking care to get both cake and sauce in each serving. Top with whipped cream, ice cream, nuts or cherries as desired.

Serves 6 to 9.

Common Room Casserole

This filling meal comes from the roadside inns of Estwilde, where its one-dish nature and simple, hearty flavors are the ideal antidote to a long, chilly day of travel on the roads.

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 large bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 1 beef kielbasa, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 c raw brown rice
- 2 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped (1 24 oz can of chopped tomatoes
- can be substituted)
- Chicken stock

Mix all ingredients in an oven-safe dish. Pour in enough chicken stock to cover rice mixture, leaving at least 1/2 inch at the top of the dish. Bake at 400° for 1 hour or until rice is cooked.

Serves 6 dwarves, 4 humans, 4 kender or 1 medium-size dragon.

Kender Stumblenoodles

This tasty meal was not always a one-dish dinner. According to this week's version of ancestral legend, kender cooks collided in the mad rush to feed an unexpectedly large crowd of diners, mixing traditional favorites Saucy Beef and Vegetable Stuff and Noodles That Look Just Like Aunt Helmley's Elbow, But Without The Warts. Modern kender insist that the concoction tastes better when mixed by entertaining recreations of the original stumbling crash.

- 1 lb hamburger
- 1/2 c onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 c bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 c tomato, cooked and finely diced (canned is fine)
- 1 14 oz can of tomato sauce
- 1 c water
- 1 lb elbow macaroni

In a large pan, brown hamburger with onion and pepper. When meat is thoroughly cooked and vegetables are soft, add tomato sauce, tomatoes and water. Lower heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes.

Cook noodles in a separate pan. Drain cooking water and return to pan. Pour contents of other pan over noodles, mix and cover. Let mixture rest for a few minutes before serving.

Serves 6 kender, 4 humans or 1 medium-size dragon.

Conclave Ice Cream

Townsfolk across Ansalon have long celebrated the Night of the Eye by encouraging children to dress up as little mages and go door to door in search of cookies representing the three moons, Solinari, Lunitari, and Nuitari. But in recent years, when the Night of the Eye has fallen during summer months, even the most devout observers have been reluctant to fire up an oven and add to the stifling heat of the day. Two young wizards, Benius and Jerriam, have offered relief. They had had heard of an ancient delicacy favored by the Emperor of Ergoth. Braving exploding gnomish refrigeration machinery and uncooperative cows, they introduced three versions of ice cream to the Conclave, one dedicated to the mages and God of each Order.

Solinari Vanilla Ice Cream

- 1 c whole milk
- 4 egg yolks
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1 c heavy cream
- 3 t vanilla extract
- Rock salt

Warm milk over low heat until steaming, but not boiling, preferably in a double-boiler. In another bowl, mix egg yolks and sugar until smooth. Add hot milk slowly to egg and sugar mix, starting by tempering the mixture with one tablespoon of milk at a time to avoid curdling. Once mixture is at same temperature as the hot milk, pour in the remaining milk while stirring the mixture. Then return entire mixture to the milk pan and heat gently while stirring until it thickens. Do not allow mixture to boil, or egg will curdle. Once thickened, cast Ray of Frost to cool to room temperature; if no spellcasters are available, put mixture into gnomish refrigeration device. When mixture is cold, stir in cream and vanilla extract.

Freeze water using Ray of Frost, or cast small-scale Wall of Ice spell, then crush ice as finely as possible. Fill a small tub or very large bowl with ice. Add 1/2 c of rock salt for every 2 c of ice. Place pan of mixture into container of ice and stir continuously until mixture becomes icy and thick. Serve immediately or place in a freeze-safe container and chill in freezing compartment of gnomish device until desired.

Nuitari Chocolate Ice Cream

- 2 c whole milk
- 5 egg yolks
- 3/4 c sugar
- 1 c heavy cream
- 1/4 t salt
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 3 T unsweetened cocoa powder

Warm milk over low heat until steaming, but not boiling, preferably in a double-boiler. In another bowl, mix egg yolks and 1/2 c of sugar until smooth. Add hot milk slowly to egg and sugar mix, starting by tempering the mixture with one tablespoon of milk at a time to avoid curdling. Once mixture is at same temperature as the hot milk, pour in the remaining milk while stirring the mixture. Then return entire mixture to the milk pan and heat gently while stirring until it thickens. Do not allow mixture to boil, or egg will curdle. Once thickened, add cocoa, vanilla, salt and remaining 1/4 c of sugar. Cast Ray of Frost to cool to room temperature; if no spellcasters are available, put mixture into gnomish refrigeration device. When mixture is cold, stir in cream.

Freeze water using Ray of Frost, or cast small-scale Wall of Ice spell, then crush ice as finely as possible. Fill a small tub or very large bowl with ice. Add 1/2 c of rock salt for every 2 c of ice. Place pan of mixture into container of ice and stir continuously until mixture becomes icy and thick. Serve immediately or place in a freeze-safe container and chill in freezing compartment of gnomish device until desired.

Lunitari Strawberry Ice Cream

- 1 c whole milk
- 3 egg yolks
- 1/2 c sugar
- 2 c heavy cream
- 1/4 t salt
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 3 c fresh strawberries, cleaned, cored and halved

Mash strawberries with 1/4 c of the sugar and let stand at room temperature while cooking rest of mixture. Warm milk over low heat until steaming, but not boiling, preferably in a double-boiler. In another bowl, mix egg yolks and 1/4 c of sugar until smooth. Add hot milk slowly to egg and sugar mix, starting by tempering the mixture with one tablespoon of milk at a time to avoid curdling. Once mixture is at same temperature as the hot milk, pour in the remaining milk while stirring the mixture. Then return entire mixture to the milk pan and heat gently while stirring until it thickens. Do not allow mixture to boil, or egg will curdle. Cast Ray of Frost to cool to room temperature; if no spellcasters are available, put mixture into gnomish refrigeration device. When mixture is cold, stir in cream, salt and vanilla. Add strawberries and sugar to mixture.

Freeze water using Ray of Frost, or cast small-scale Wall of Ice spell, then crush ice as finely as possible. Fill a small tub or very large bowl with ice. Add 1/2 c of rock salt for every 2 c of ice. Place pan of mixture into container of ice and stir continuously until mixture becomes icy and thick. Serve immediately or place in a freeze-safe container and chill in freezing compartment of gnomish device until desired.

Note: Stirring the mixture in the ice bath will take about 30 minutes, and can get tiring. If an apprentice is at hand, have the apprentice stir. If a practiced spellcaster is available, cast Unseen Servant and have it churn the mixture. If spellcaster is adept, a Polar Ray spell can be substituted entirely for ice bath. If spellcasters are scarce but courage is high, employ a Gnomish Ice Cream Making Machine, taking all precautions against inevitable explosions.

Serves 4 to 6.

Nerakan Fruit Puff

This pastry confection has diagonal slashes revealing the fruit filling inside. It gets its name from the fashion at one time in the region of Neraka, where ladies' dresses woulod have large puffy sleeves slashed to show material of a contrasting color beneath. After the Dragonarmies occupied Neraka, the dish was given a more graphic name: Dragonslash Pie. Troops dubbed it this for the way a victim would bleed from similar diagonal slashes made by a dragon's talons.

- 2 T salted butter
- 4 c apples, peeled and chopped, preferably firm and sweet-tart varieties like
- Braeburn, Fuji, Empire or Macintosh
- 1 c golden raisins, dry or soaked overnight in apple cider for extra juiciness
- 1/4 c plus 2 T sugar
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed to room temperature
- 1 large egg, beaten

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add apples, cover and simmer until tender, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add raisins and 1/4 c of the sugar. Cook uncovered, stirring frequently, until mixture thickens and reduces, about 35 minutes. Let fruit mixture cool.

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll out the pastry into a 16x12-inch rectangle. Cut pastry in half lengthwise, making two 6x6-inch rectangles. Place one rectangle on prepared baking sheet. Leaving a 1-inch border, spoon fruit filling onto the pastry. Brush the border with beaten egg, lay second rectangle of pastry on top, and press edges together firmly. Brush edges and top of pastry with more egg glaze and sprinkle with remaining 2 T of sugar. Slash 1 1/2 inch diagonal slits down the middle of pastry at 2-inch intervals, exposing the filling. Bake at 400° until golden brown, about 25 minutes.

For a more gory-looking Dragonslash Pie, substitute cherry, raspberry or strawberry fruit filling for apple filling.

Fainted Speaker

This oddly named dish is a Kagonesti treat originally called "Drunken Dwarves" because of the squat look and highly alcoholic content of the figs. Legend has it, however, that when it was first given to the Speaker of the Stars, he found it so delicious that he fainted. The high alcohol content may have also had something to do with his condition.

- 1 c red wine
- 1 c orange juice
- 1 c water
- 1 c sugar
- 1/4 c brandy
- 10 figs (figs are rare, seasonal and quite expensive; firm pears like D'Anjou will
- also work)
- 2 oranges, peeled and cut into 4 to 6 sections

Mix the wine, orange juice, water, brandy and sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the figs and orange sections and cook gently until the figs are soft, spooning the liquid over them constantly. Large fruit may need to be cut in half. Serve warm, with remaining liquid poured on top (further reduced to a thicker syrup, if desired) and fresh heavy cream.

Solamnic Mushroom Ragout with Dumplings

Late in the autumn, Solamnia's vast coastal forests abound with wild mushrooms. Peasants and Knights alike enjoy good hearty meals as the weather turns cool, and this is one of Solamnia's oldest and most popular. Lord Liam Ehrling himself was a great connoisseur of food and drink, and this mushroom dish is known to have been one of his favorites, while still being economical enough for any peasant to make. Perhaps the simple, savory and filling flavors of this dish represent part of his long-lasting popularity in Solamnia.

- 1 2/3 c chanterelles (if dried, measure after soaking overnight in water)
- 1 2/3 c crimini mushrooms
- 1 2/3 c white button mushrooms
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 small white onion, diced
- 1/4 c smoked ham, finely diced
- 1/3 c scallions, chopped
- 1 1/2 T fresh parsley, finely chopped (2 t if dried)
- 1 1/2 T fresh chives, finely chopped (2 t if dried)
- 1/2 c sour cream
- 2 c vegetable stock
- 1 T olive oil
- 2 T clarified butter
- 2 T flour
- 1 1/2 T tomato puree
- 2 c day-old bread (minus crust), diced
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 c milk
- 1/4 t caraway seeds, finely ground
- 1 T fresh thyme leaves (1 1/2 t if dried)
- 1/2 t ground nutmeg
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat olive oil in skillet over medium-high heat until sizzling. Add ham and white onion and cook until onion is soft and translucent. In a separate saucepan or double boiler, heat milk until steaming, but not boiling. In a mixing bowl, combine bread cubes, eggs, cooked ham and onion mixture, and salt and pepper . Add hot milk and mix until everything is evenly moistened. Let mixture cool slightly, until it can be handled to be shaped into walnut-sized balls.

Wash all the mushrooms with cold water, pat dry with a clean dishtowel or paper towels, and cut them in halves. In same skillet used for ham mixture, heat clarified butter to sizzling. Stir flour into melted butter and continue stirring until flour turns golden-brown. Add red onion and scallions and cook until just soft. Add vegetable stock and tomato puree, and return to a boil. Add mushrooms, parsley and caraway and reduce heat to medium-low. Season to taste with salt and pepper and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in sour cream and let cook for 5 more minutes, until slightly thickened. In a separate saucepan, heat water to a boil and add dumplings, cooking until they float to the surface. Serve with dumplings at bottom of each bowl and mushroom mixture spooned over them. Garnish with thyme leaves.

Serves 4 to 6.

Hunter's Stew

This filling stew is popular in the South of Ansalon, especially among hunters who have to spend long days outdoors as the days turn colder and the nights grow longer. Its hearty and complex flavors warm a body long after the last spoonful, and reheat even tastier than the initial serving.

- 1 3/4 lbs venison, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 large potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1-inch cubes
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1/4 c bacon, diced
- 2 carrots, cut into thick rounds
- 1 c beef stock
- 2 c beer (ale or a dark stout is best)
- 2 t packed brown sugar
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
- 2 sprigs of thyme (1/4 t if dried)
- 6 juniper berries, crushed
- 1/4 c dark chocolate, grated (the higher quality, the better)
- 1/2 t freshly ground black pepper
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 T flour

Brown venison in a skillet over medium-high heat then set meat aside in an oven-safe, 2 qt covered casserole dish. Fry onions, carrots and bacon in the same pan, stirring to incorporate leftover venison juices, until onions are lightly browned. Add mixture to meat in casserole dish. Add garlic to the skillet, cooking until lightly browned, and then gradually stir in flour, beef stock and beer. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, and then pour over ingredients in casserole. Add brown sugar, chocolate, thyme, juniper berries and pepper to mixture in casserole, stirring well to combine thoroughly. Cover casserole dish with the lid, and then cook in the oven at 275 for 3 hours. Half and hour before the stew is done, add potatoes, ensuring that they are fully covered by the liquid.

Serves 4.

Otik's Fire in the Belly Breakfast

This zesty dish starts the day off right for any traveler lucky enough to be passing through Solace as the sun rises. Like his famed spiced potatoes, Otik adds spices by the handful, one for each season since spring, so that by the coldest of winter mornings, the lingering heat keeps a fire lit in a traveller's belly long into the afternoon.

- 6 eggs
- 1/2 t dry mustard
- 1 c milk
- 1/4 c scallions, finely chopped
- 1 lb hot pork sausage, casing removed
- 1/8-1/2 t cayenne pepper
- 1/8-1/2 t paprika (sweet Hungarian is best)
- 1-4 drops hot sauce
- 1/2 c pepper jack cheese, grated
- 1/2 c sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper , to taste
- 1 bag frozen potatoes O'Brien (potatoes with peppers and onions)

Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sausage and onion until browned. Stir in cayenne pepper, paprika, salt and pepper. Pour frozen potatoes into a greased 8x8-inch oven-safe baking dish, forming a 1-inch layer. Spread sausage mixture on top of potatoes. In a separate bowl, mix together eggs, milk, mustard and hot sauce. Pour egg mixture over sausage and potatoes, and top with mixed shredded cheeses. If possible, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight; it still tastes great if cooked immediately. Bake at 350° for 45-60 minutes, or until surface is golden brown.

Serves 4 to 6.

Palanthas Torte

This festive meal is a favorite banquet entrée among Palanthan nobility. It is especially popular at wedding feasts, where its combination of sweet and salty flavors are said to represent the joys and tears of married life, and its flaky pastry crust resembles the delicate layers of true love over the years.

- 8 oz pork
- 5 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 c currants or golden raisins
- 2 t sugar
- 1/2 ginger powder
- 2 t Gharum Khuri-Khan (recipe below)
- 4 bone-in chicken wings, fully cooked and skinned
- 1 T bacon fat or lard (shortening is acceptable if others are unavailable)
- 3 prunes, finely chopped
- 5 threads of saffron, bloomed in 1/2 t boiling water
- 1/2 t salt
- 1 9-inch pie shell

Heat water to boiling in a saucepan. Boil pork until fully cooked, drain and grind to sausage texture. In a separate bowl, combine pork with all of the other ingredients except chicken wings. The final consistency should be thick and slightly runny, with enough egg to evenly saturate the entire mixture. Pour filling into pie shell and top with whole, cooked chicken pieces. Bake at 400° for about 20 minutes, until pastry is fully cooked and filling has set. Let rest for at least 10 minutes after baking. This can be served either warm, or cooled to room temperature.

Gharum Khuri-Khan

Khuri-Khan serves as the hub for traders of many exotic imports, but none has worked its way into the local culture as well as the spices that come from every corner of Krynn. Khurish chefs have developed several spice mixtures over the centuries, each one perfectly balanced and adaptable to many purposes in different regional cuisines, from savory pies like the Palanthas Torte to hot beverages like the invigorating infusions in Kharolis. This one is the most popular, its scent permeating the hot breezes that whip through Khuri-Khan's marketplace.

- 1 1/2 T ground cinnamon
- 1 t ground cloves
- 3 T ginger powder
- 1/2 t nutmeg
- 1/2 t galangal, if available (if not, another 1/2 t of nutmeg will suffice)
- 2 T sugar
- 1 t mace

Store in an airtight container in a cool, dark pantry or refrigerator.

Phoenixbrew

Habbukite priests developed this spicy infusion to kindle a pale reflection of their god's restorative power deep inside when he seems beyond reach. The brew has also been credited with healing powers among the broader population; its comforting warmth and sweet spiciness seem to soothe upset stomachs and overtaxed heads. Spices must be chipped, but not fully ground, in order to strain them out after brewing.

- 4 L water
- 1 1/2 c honey
- 1 1/2 t whole cloves, pounded until chipped
- 3 t cinnamon, chipped
- 5 t ginger root, dried and chipped
- 2 t dried orange zest

Heat water in a stockpot. Stir in honey and bring to a boil. Add spices and orange zest and let boil for 2 minutes, skimming off foam as it rises. Turn off heat and let steep until cool enough to drink. Strain through a fine sieve or cheesecloth. Serve warm.

Seven Gods Spice Mix

Another of the spice mixes developed in the kitchens surrounding Khuri-Khan's exotic markets, this one features spices in a rich, aromatic blend of seven parts. Which parts of the recipe represent which gods depends entirely upon which spice merchant one believes.

- 2 T ground cinnamon
- 2 T ground cloves
- 1 T ginger powder
- 1 T ground black pepper
- 1 t coriander

Tarsian Spring Soup

This rich yet delicate soup marks the end of winter in Tarsis, its pale green color bringing inside the fresh verdant colors of young shoots and leafy buds in the countryside. This springtime association long predates the Cataclysm, when ships bearing the spices that infuse the soup with their sweet aroma could finally come through the ice-locked harbor and deliver their exotic cargoes.

- 1 t whole coriander seed
- 1 bunch of fresh cilantro, washed and stemmed
- 1 c whole almonds
- 2 slices of bread (plain Italian loaf, minus crust)
- 1/4 c white vinegar
- 3 1/2 lbs split bone-in chicken breasts, skin removed
- 1 c chicken broth, or water from chicken preparation
- 1 T Gharum Khuri-Khan (see page XX)

Boil chicken breasts in a stockpot with about 8 c of water, then drain, retaining some of the liquid for later unless chicken broth is preferred. Bone and shred chicken and set aside. In a skillet over medium heat, toast almonds lightly, stirring constantly. When toasted to golden-brown, put almonds into food processor and pulse until broken into big chunks. Toast bread, dip in white vinegar and tear into pieces before putting in food processor. Crush and add coriander seeds to food processor. Add cilantro leaves to food processor, then pulse mixture until smooth, frequently scraping sides of bowl with a spatula. Put shredded chicken back into stockpot and add reserved cooking water or broth until slightly soupy. Stir in ingredients from food processor. Add spices and heat through, about 5 minutes. Cover and remove from heat. Serve warm with a final sprinkle of cinnamon.

Serves 4 to 6.

Merwick Purplefruit Puree

Until recently, Merwick has remained a safe, sleepy, backwater port where house doors are rarely locked. The sole exception to this open-door atmosphere comes in late summer, when the purplefruit hang so thickly on their vines that neighbors lock their houses tightly, lest a generous gardener with an overabundance of that local vegetable surreptitiously "donate" armloads them where no one is home to turn them down. Since the memory of lean years is never far away, Merwickians still feel compelled to make use of every last purplefruit, and this unusual preparation transforms the pulpy flesh into a meltingly rich accompaniment to roasted meats.

- 3 medium eggplants
- 1 large white onion
- 5 c chicken broth
- 1 c whole almonds, blanched and peeled
- 1/2 lb Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, grated (if Spanish Tetilla is available, it is a
- closer match)
- 1/2 lb Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (if Italian Caciocavallo is available, it is a
- closer match)
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 tsp Seven Gods Spice Mix
- 1 tsp caraway seed

Peel and quarter eggplants. Cut onion into thin wedges. Place eggplant and onion into a stockpot and cover with 4 c of broth, adding water to stretch broth if needed. Cook until eggplant is tender but not mushy, occasionally pushing the floating pieces down to the bottom of the pot. Drain eggplant and place in a separate pot. Put almonds into food processor and pulse while slowly adding remaining cup of chicken broth, until almonds are very finely ground. Strain mixture through a fine sieve or cheesecloth and discard almond particulate. Slowly add almond liquid to eggplant until mixture is saucy but not watery. Add grated Parmigiano (or Tetilla) cheese slowly while using a potato masher to mash and stir. Add more almond liquid if needed. Add egg yolks one-by-one, stirring constantly with potato masher. Stir in spice mix. Serve warm with sprinkling of caraway seed and a layer of Romano (or Caciocavallo) cheese.

Serves 4.

Haltigothian Lamb Roast

The scent of charcoal and roasting meat fills the citrus groves of Haltigoth, heralding the beginning of the new harvest. During the season of dangerous frosts preceding the ripening of the fruit, farmers and their families often sleep on the ground in the groves, ready to toss buckets of campfire-warmed water high into the branches to stave off a killing freeze. Wealthy landowners and fruit merchants combine their resources to reward the groves' farmers for their hard work and vigilance with a lavish feast. This dish is a favorite, combining several tastes of spring in the country.

- 1 3- to 4-lb butterflied leg of lamb
- 10 to 12 fresh thyme sprigs
- 2 garlic cloves
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 t freshly ground black pepper
- Coarse salt, to taste

Start a charcoal fire (or gas grill or broiler) and place rack at least 4 inches away from heat source. Trim lamb of any excess fat and, if any parts seem too thick to cook quickly, make a horizontal cut so the meat lies open and fairly flat. Strip thyme leaves from the stems and mince them together with the garlic and orange zest (or pulse in a food processor). Add pepper and salt to mixture. Use the point of a sharp knife to make small holes in the meat, every half inch or so, and stick a bit of the mixture into each one. Rub the meat with whatever is leftover. Grill or broil meat until it is nicely browned, even a little bit charred, on both sides, about 20 to 30 minutes. The internal temperature at the thickest part of the meat should reach about 125°. Let rest for 5 minutes before slicing thinly and serving.

Serves 6 or more.

Recipes from the Trough

That Inn in the trees may have a height advantage over our place, but our barmaids are just as hospitable, and our food is just as good. At least, we think so, so we sent one of our boys over to slip these recipes into the Majere's book. If you like what you see, maybe you'll stop on in to the Trough. . . if you know what's good for you.

Salah-Khan's Stew

The Green Dragon Highlord Salah-Khan, warlord of the Khur tribe, was not known for his excesses. His fear of poisoning contributed to a somewhat temperate diet, and he never ate or drank anything without having it tested first. Salah-Khan's cooks always prepared this dish, a favorite of the Highlord's, under his scrutiny; any cook who dared to stray from the recipe was flogged. Rumors persist that it was exactly this dish, which combines many tribal ingredients popular in the Khur region, which contained the poison some attribute his mysterious death to. Apparently, his cooks forgot to sample the (stolen) elven brandy. Perhaps for this reason, it has since gained popularity among the Highlord's foes and rivals, also.

1 lb ground lamb
1 onion, thinly sliced
4 garlic cloves, thickly sliced
2 T olive oil
1/4 T crushed red pepper flakes
1 1/2 ground cumin (roughly ground whole cumin seeds are best)
1/4 T cinnamon
7 T chopped fresh mint
1/2 T salt
1/4 T freshly ground black pepper
1/2 c brandy
1 1/4 c dried lentils
6 c chicken or beef stock

Brown ground lamb in a stockpot, then remove using a slotted spoon and set aside. In the same pot, heat olive oil to sizzling. Add onion, garlic, red pepper flakes, cumin, cinnamon, salt, pepper, and 3 T of the mint, and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onion is soft. Add brandy and cook for another 2-3 minutes, until liquid reduces by half. Add lentils and stock, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Use a blender, food processor or stick blender to puree half of the stew. When the soup reaches the desired consistency, add ground lamb and remaining mint to the mixture and heat for another 5 minutes before serving.

Serves 4 to 6.

Saifumi Soup

This is a typical sailors' meal, drawing from the abundance of seafood and fish available on the Saifumi trade routes. With ships that draw only two feet of water, both sea lanes and river ways are open to these enterprising souls, and the flavor of this stew changes dramatically based on the variety of seafood and fish drawn from salt and fresh water sources. Vanderjack, founder of the legendary Brass Tigers mercenary company, attributed this version of the dish to his Saifumi mother, and served it at the homecoming banquet for every campaign, to reward success and soothe the sting of failure with a full belly.

1 c scallions or leeks, sliced
1/2 c olive oil
1/2 stalk fennel, sliced thinly
3 sprigs of Italian flat-leaf parsley
1 bay leaf
1 T fresh thyme leaves (1 T if dried)
2 c dry white wine
4 c water
4 lbs fish (3-4 different kinds, if possible)
1 lb raw shrimp, cleaned and deveined, but not shelled
1 lb mussels or scallops in the shell, well scrubbed
Salt to taste (amounts will vary, depending on whether you're using ocean or fresh-water seafood and fish)
Thick slices of homestyle bread

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add scallions or leeks and sauté until soft. Add fennel, herbs, wine and water, and bring to a boil. Season with salt, reduce heat to low and simmer for 45 minutes. Strain stock through a sieve and squeeze juice from vegetables, discarding remaining vegetable fibers. Return stock to the pot and bring to a boil. Lightly salt the fish and let stand for 10 minutes, then rinse and lower into the boiling liquid. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add shrimp and scallops or mussels and simmer for 10 more minutes. Taste and add more salt, if needed. Toast bread slices and place one at the bottom of each dish. Place a variety of fish and some of the broth into each dish. Serve hot with lemon juice, if desired.

Serves 6 to 8.

Scavenger Soup

This soup makes use of anything and everything one can typically find in a pantry. It was originally called "Gully Soup," after the gully dwarves' haphazard style of cooking in one pot whatever they managed to find in that day's foraging, but it has been renamed to prevent scaring off more educated diners from a delicious and economical stew.

1 lb sausage, ideally kielbasa or chorizo, diced
2 small onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 lb leftover meat or poultry, ideally chicken, diced
1/2 c each of pre-soaked pearl barley, lima beans, kidney beans, butter beans, and black-eyed peas
6 c broth (chicken, vegetable or beef are all fine)
2 cans of diced tomatoes
1/2 T chili powder (optional)
1 T mixed dried herbs (anything goes, but basil, thyme and oregano work well)
Several handfuls of whatever greens or vegetables are available, roughly chopped (parboiling harder vegetables, like carrots or potatoes, reduces cooking time)

Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sausage, onion, garlic and meat until meats are thoroughly cooked and onion is soft and translucent. Transfer mixture to a stockpot, and add everything but the greens. Bring to a boil, then lower heat to low and simmer until soup reduces to desired thickness (but at least 10 minutes). Add greens just before serving, cooking until wilted.

Serves 8 humans, or 15 well-tempered gully dwarves.

Toede in the Hole

Originally, this dish was simply named "Toad in the Hole" for the well-hidden but clearly audible inhabitants of the swamplands around Xak Tsaroth. In more recent days, the recipe was renamed in honor of the Highlord—partly because of the heavy, thick nature of the dish, and partly because of all of the "holes" Toede seems to get himself into. He, of course, is not aware of the unflattering comparison, but has been known to enjoy the dish none the wiser.

8 fresh pork or beef sausages, each about 2 oz (the freshest and highest quality possible; the old saying goes that this dish stands on the strength of its sausages)
1/2 c plus 2 T flour
1 1/8 c milk
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/4 T salt
4 T vegetable oil or lard

Measure flour into a bowl, leaving a little depression in the center to hold the beaten eggs. Add half the milk, mix until smooth, then add remaining milk. Beat until fully mixed, then allow batter to rest for 30 minutes. Stir again just before cooking. In a skillet, lightly brown the sausages. Pour fat from the cooked sausages into a small roasting tin or deep 9x13-inch baking dish, adding oil or lard until the amount of fat is about 4 T. Heat fat until it just begins to smoke, then pour in the batter. Lay sausages on top of batter. Bake at 450° for 7 minutes, then reduce temperature to 400° and bake for another 20 to 30 minutes, until batter has risen around sausages and turns golden brown. Important! Do NOT open the oven door to check on the batter! Any cold air will cause mixture to deflate. (In fact, local tradition says to keep all doors and windows closed as well while the dish is in the oven so Toede can't slip away.) Serve hot from the oven, preferably with a rich homemade brown gravy and potatoes.

Serves 4 to 6.

Contributing Authors

Margaret Weis is the New York Times Bestselling author of Dragonlance, the Death Gate Cycle, and the upcoming Dragonships series (with co-author Tracy Hickman). She lives in a converted barn in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Cam and **Jessica Banks** live with their two sons and a cat in Southeastern Wisconsin. Cam has contributed to over a dozen Dragonlance products as a game designer and developer. His first published novel, *The Sellsword*, is due to be released in early 2008. Jessica holds a graduate degree in Irish Medieval History and has contributed to numerous Dragonlance game products as a proofreader and playtester. She is also an amateur cook, and loves to play with recipes and exotic dishes.

Shivam Bhaat, known to Dragonlance fans online as Talinthas, recently contributed to the *Dragons of Krynn* sourcebook from Margaret Weis Productions and enjoys discussing theology and fandom in general. He lives in California.

Artist **Larry Elmore** is universally recognized among Dragonlance fans as one of the defining illustrators of the world of Krynn. His art has graced the covers of hundreds of novels and game products. He lives in Kentucky.

Luis De Pippo has been a mainstay of the fan-based Whitestone Council since its inception, and has contributed to numerous Dragonlance products as a freelancer and reviewer. He lives in Argentina.

Janet Deaver-Pack, also known to Dragonlance fans as the elven bard Mirrashar, is an author and editor with a long association with the world of Krynn. She lives in Wisconsin.

Canadian-born author and educator **John Grubber**'s works have appeared in several Dragonlance products in the past. His expertise in anthropology has brought new insights to Krynnish peoples, from the Bakali to the High Ogres.

Nicole Harsch is one half of the staged combat duo the Crossed Swords. She and her partner Mike Sakuta demonstrate swordfighting choreography to crowds of eager fans. Nicole has also penned numerous songs and lyrics for Dragonlance products, as well as articles dealing with knights and knightly traditions.

Mary Herbert is a novelist best known to Dragonlance fans as the author of *Clandestine Circle*, *Dragon's Bluff*, and the Linsha trilogy. She lives in Metro Atlanta with her family.

Sean Macdonald, also known as Kipper Snifferdoo, is an author, cartographer, and game designer whose wonderful maps have graced many Dragonlance books from Margaret Weis Productions and Wizards of the Coast. He lives in Alabama with his wife and four daughters.

Novelist **Chris Pierson**'s Kingpriest Trilogy and Taladas Trilogy have earned him a strong following among Dragonlance fans worldwide. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lester Smith is a game designer and poet who was recently named the president of the Wisconsin Society of Poets. Conveniently, he also lives in Wisconsin.

Kevin T. Stein is a contributor to many Dragonlance anthologies, and is the author of the novel *Brothers Majere*. A second-degree blackbelt in kendo, Kevin's tales of the bündesphar continue to reveal a side of Krynn untouched by other works.

Clark Valentine is a software engineer who lives in central Pennsylvania with his wife, editor Amanda Valentine, and their two children. Clark's contributions to Dragonlance include *Knightly Orders of Ansalon*, *Races of Ansalon*, and *Dragons of Krynn*.

Designer, author, podcaster, and comic book writer **Trampas Whiteman** is perhaps best known as the chairman of the Whitestone Council and the guiding force behind the Dragonlance Nexus fan site. He lives in Kansas City, Missouri, with his wife and two sons.

Special thanks to all the fans and readers who contributed articles, recipes, mystical artifacts, and lore to this volume. These include the following whose contributions were published:

William Anderson, Tom Baumbach, June Bloom, Weldon Chen, Steve Coon, Stéphane Couture, Terry "Skyblade" Durbin, Terry "Stormblade" Durbin, Jr., David Foster, Katie Holdbrook, Ben Jacobson, Marc Konigsberg, Matthias von Kummer, Chuck Martinell, Joe Mashuga, Ralph O' Brien, Ashe Potter, Brian Reese, Craig J. Ries, Nathan Ross, Chris Sinclair, Clive Squire, Heine Stick.

interior artists
Lindsay Archer
Michael Bielaczyc
Paul Bielaczyc
Daniel Bryce

cartography
Sean Macdonald

layout & design
Digger Hayes

MIGHT, MAGIC
and MONSTERS!
KIEFER SUTHERLAND
LUCY LAWLESS
MICHAEL ROSENBAUM
DRAGONLANCE
A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURE TALE
DRAGONS OF AUTUMN TWILIGHT
Available On DVD January 15.

Bill of Fare

Hail, Traveler! Welcome to the Inn of the Last Home.

You visit us during the Fourth Age, a time of war, when the Gods of Light and Darkness battle for the lands of Ansalon. But, for now, forget the dangers of the road. Wash away the dust with our finest ale, as you eat your fill of Otik's spiced potatoes. Relax by the fire and listen to the old man's tales of knights who ride to battle on the backs of dragons. Pay no heed to the strange-looking mage who watches from the shadows, though with the kender about, you might want to keep your hands on your purse!

Rest well in our inn this night, friend, for on the morrow you may wake to the beating of the drums of war…

For Your Enjoyment, We Offer

- Tales of men and dragons in a time of conflict.
- Scrolls containing ancient magic and relics of the gods.
- Legends of wolf-bonded warriors and kender knights.
- Forgotten lore of goblins, the crafting of dwarven jewelry, and more.
- Feast traditions and recipes gathered by our own Tika Waylan.
- Songs of the era, with both music and lyrics.

margaret weis productions, ltd.

© 2007 Margaret Weis Productions. Margaret Weis Productions and the Margaret Weis Productions Logo are trademarks owned by Margaret Weis Productions Ltd. All rights Reserved.

Dragonlance, the Dragonlance Logo, d20, the d20 System™ Logo, Wizards of the Coast, and the Wizards of the Coast Logo are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. ©2007, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Used with permission. All rights Reserved